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HUGH LEE;

Or, The Hawks of the Sound.

By CAPTAIN HARRY POMEROY.



"IF I DON'T SOUSE HIM IN THIS 'ERE PICKLE, I DON'T KNOW NOTHING ABOUT PICKLIN' TORIES," SAID SIM.

HUGH LEE;

OR,

THE HAWKS OF THE SOUND.

By Captain Harry Pomeroy.

CHAPTER I.

THE WATER WAGTAILS.

During the war of the Revolution the numerous bays and coves that indent the Long Island shore of the Sound, witnessed a species of warfare which, if less grand and imposing than naval combats of later days, was yet bloody and barbarous to a degree, and just as persistently and energetically prosecuted.

At the time of which we write there resided in and about North Hempstead, three families, named respectively Lee, Joy, and Whyte, certain members of each of which will play prominent parts in our story.

Captain John Lee, familiarly and widely known as "Captain Jack," who had retired from the sea, owing to partial blindness, resided with his family, consisting of wife, a son, and two daughters, on a farm beyond the eastern boundary of Hempstead, toward Oyster Bay.

Captain Jack was a Whig to the backbone, a most pronounced and uncompromising patriot; and all the members of his family were as true to the principles that animated the patriots at large as the husband and father, though less demonstrative and aggressive.

Between the Lee farm and the boundary line of Hempstead, lay the farm of Mr. Samuel Joy, a widower with son and daughter, the former a young man of twenty, named Gilbert, the latter a charming maid of eighteen, named Constance.

As far as his political status was concerned, Farmer Joy was "on the fence," with a strong leaning toward the Tories. Gil Joy, as his son was always called, was a wavering sort of fellow, neither Patriot or Tory, but friendly, apparently, to the noble cause, for reasons to be given shortly.

Constance, his sister, however, unlike her father and brother, was neither a neutral nor a waverer, but a decided Patriot, true as steel to the cause.

The third family was that of Mr. Walter Whyte, an out and out Tory, doing business in Hempstead, then occupied by the British, who used the old Presbyterian church as barracks, guard-house, and prison, and this man had one son, Walter, Jr., who was as bitter a Tory as was his father.

Now, to explain the situation, let us say that Hugh Lee, Captain Jack's son, a fine, open-faced, athletic young man of twenty-two, was in love with Constance Joy, as was also young Walt Whyte, about Hugh's age.

Gil Joy was in love with Hugh's eldest sister Lucy, a fair maid of seventeen summers, who returned his love. This fact may account for the lukewarm patriotism he displayed, when otherwise he would have leaned, as did his father, to the Tory side, or gone over to it body and soul through the influence of Walt Whyte.

While Gil Joy's love for Lucy Lee made but an insincere patriot of him—a lukewarm supporter of the grandest cause ever fought to successful issue—that of Constance Joy for Hugh Lee made the staunchest patriot of her, the most defiant little female rebel in the land; and that she was a rebel she gloried in boasting.

Now, Farmer Joy did not sanction either the suit of Hugh Lee for the hand of his daughter, or that of his son for the hand of Captain Jack's daughter; favoring, in the first instance, the suit of Walt Whyte, and in the second preferring a daughter-in-law from a family on the royalist or Tory side.

Hugh Lee, our hero, was a whale-boat privateersman, the commander of a twelve-oared craft carrying a swivel gun. With one exception, the crew of the Water Wagtail, as the boat was called, were sterling patriots, young fellows whose fidelity to their country's cause was unquestionable, the exception noted being Gil Joy.

A little to the west of Oyster Bay there was, at that time, a small, bottle-shaped inlet, long since worn away, through whose narrow neck poured in and out the waters of the Sound.

Near the lower end, on the right of this haven, in a partially artificial recess dug in the bluff, the existence of which would never have been suspected, nature and art effectually concealing the opening, lay the Water Wagtail, there always being a sufficiency of water to float her.

The inner end of this recess or chamber, which had been excavated by the Water Wagtails, opened out into a ravine, thus securing entrance and exit by land as well as by water, and as effectually concealed.

The chamber by the bluff was occupied one evening in the month of June, more than a hundred years ago, by a party of nine men ranging from 20 to 35 years of age, whose costume, if not as picturesque as those of the Continental brigands of the present day, were at least as striking and varied, if not grotesque in some instances.

These were the Water Wagtails, and they were evidently discussing some subject which was of general interest.

"I tell yer, boys," said one of the elder men, "I b'lieve he'll betray us. He's limber in the knees on this side o' the line, an' too stiff on the other side, with that Hessian whelp, Walt Whyte."

"I ain't afeard on't, Sim," spoke up one a few years younger. "He's in love with Lu Lee, an' that'll prevent him. I hain't got no great b'lief in his stickin' to our side, on'y fur thot; but that'll hold him."

"As we've been talkin' this thing over among us," spoke up a third, "s'posin' we speak to Cap'n Hugh about it some time. Can't do it to-night, as Gil will come along with him prob'bly."

"Jest what I mean to do," said the first speaker, Sim.

"Might as well," said a fourth, "cos thar ain't no use, an' a good deal o' danger, in havin' a feller here that ain't true blue. Hello! here's Cap'n Hugh—alone!"

Hugh Lee, in a faded blue flannel shirt, cloth cap, patched drab trousers, and cowhide boots, stepped into the chamber amid the conclave, from the ravine passage, and his open, manly face was good to look upon as it caught the red glare of the flaming torches.

"All here? No," were his first words, as he looked them over quickly. "Where's the Swains—Zeb and Mark?"

"Some o' their folks dead over to Cow Neck, Cap'n Hugh," responded Sim, whose surname was Wales. "Where's Gil Joy, cap'n?" he queried, an instant later, his tone a significant one to his fellows.

"Gil?—oh, he'll be here. I thought he might get here before me. Time enough, though, between now and shut-down darkness, for there's not a breath of wind astir, and won't be afore sunrise. The schooner won't much more'n fetch abreast of the 'Bottle'—'Bottle Bay' their retreat had been named, but they spoke of it as the 'Bottle' for short—"afore eleven, let them tow their smartest. We'll capture her long afore daylight, and that Newport Tory, Skipper Snow, 'll wish he hadn't supplied these British cruisers for cursed British gold—the Hessian!"

Hugh Lee now sat down on a box resigned to him by one of his crew, and lightsd a pipe, a silence that was almost oppressive settling upon the motley group, the flare of the flaming torches throwing grotesque, danching shadows about the floor and sides of the cavern, presenting to the eye a weird, fantastic scene.

Sim Wales, the second in command of the Water Wagtail, was the first to break the silence that had become irksome.

"Cap'n Hugh," said he, knocking the ashes from his black clay pipe, "there's ben some talk among us—I mout's well say as how, p'r'aps, I've done as much on't as any one—some talk consarnin' Gil Joy. Some on us—the most on us, I guess, Cap'n Hugh—hain't got no very great opinion o' Gil Joy. We don't think he would risk much on our side, to say the least. To say more, we don't think he'd lay still an' have his leg sawed off, afore he'd let Walt Whyte an' his Tory crew o' cut-throats into the Bottle, an' into this 'ere back parlor. That's what most on us think, Cap'n Hugh; an' on'y that he's sparkin' your sister, you'd a hearn of it afore. That made us kind o' bashful 'bout sayin' anything to you 'bout it, you see—sorry, now, Cap'n Hugh; but it hed better be out'n in, you know."

"You're right, Sim, right," Hugh Lee promptly spoke up. "It's better out than in, as you say. I wish you'd spoken afore about this. Now, as to Gil, I know he's a faint heart in our cause, but I can't think he'd prove a false heart. He's weak in his principles, but not a bad fellow at heart."

"When a feller's weak in his principles in sech times as these," broke in Sim Wales, "the devil will get him onto the wrong side in time, sure. A weak chap's a dangerous one."

"There's a good deal of truth in that, Sim," rejoined Hugh Lee. "But you see how Gil is situated. I don't know what he'll gain by turning traitor, but I do know what he'll lose—one o' the finest girls in the land, if I say it that shouldn't."

"That's what I said," broke in Jake Long; "she'll hold him—your sister will."

"I think so myself, boys," said Hugh; "but a fig for such fidelity as that—fidelity that hinges on the gain or loss of something outside of the cause. You suspect him—you're afraid of him—that's enough. Out he goes from among us, unless he

takes an oath such as I'll talk of to him—such as each one of us will take—the strongest and most binding oath I can invent. Unless he takes that oath to be true to the cause of liberty, true to us, out he goes. If he takes the oath, I'll take the risk of his betraying us—will you?" this to his crew collectively.

"I will, for one," promptly responded Sim Wales, the others severally, and in like manner, responding.

"The thing is settled, then, till he comes," said Hugh, adding, "act just the same's usual when he comes, boys. Don't let him see that—he comes now."

A moment, and a young fellow of twenty, tolerably well arrayed, and quite good looking, his face showing the irresolution of a weak nature, more amiability than shrewdness, emerged from the ravine passage into the chamber.

She new-comer was Gil Joy, who was greeted as usual, and soon found a seat.

A few moments of desultory conversation, and Hugh Lee came to his feet.

"Boys—friends and brothers," he said. "I'm going to take an oath, such a one as no true patriot would hesitate to take, I know."

Straightening himself up, he raised high his right hand, his left pressed upon his heart, and, after a moment's pause, proceeded to the utterance of the words of a most binding oath, which was too extended, and perhaps too startling for presentation in these columns, his manner and tones, the place and its surroundings, the weird red light of the flaming torches, all lending weight to the impressive solemnity of his utterances.

But the climax was reached when, surrounded by his comrades, who had risen, he threw both hands aloft, and invoked the vengeance of Heaven upon himself if he failed to fulfill his oath, his tall, sinewy form, straight as an arrow, showing finely in the red glare, seeming, under the spell of the occasion, the form of a demigod—the genius of imprecation.

The profound silence which succeeded Hugh Lee's impressive oath was broken at length by Sim Wales.

"By the god o' battles, Cap'n Hugh, but that was a mighty bouncin' oath! But I, Sim Wales, ken take that oath—amen!"

"And I!" "And I!" the others, with one exception, singly responded.

"Swear us, Cap'n Hugh!" the enthusiastic Sim exclaimed; "swear us now. Say the words slow an' few 't a time, so's we ken all speak 'em, and not miss any on 'em."

He and eight of his fellows ranged themselves in a row, the ninth standing aloof, with a face that paled even under the torches' red glare, and limbs that trembled as he stood.

"Gracious!" he exclaimed; "I can't!"

"Can't what?" Hugh Lee demanded, almost fiercely, in accents thunder-toned and startling, betraying his surprise and anger.

The heart of poor, irresolute Gil Joy shrunk in his breast.

"Can't what?" again demanded Hugh Lee.

"Can't do that; can't—"

"Can't take that oath—is that it, Gil Joy?" said Hugh Lee, sharply. "Why not?"

"Because—there. Father says you'll all be hung. He says King George will keep his own and crush all the rebels in the land."

"Poor, pitiful boy!" contemptuously exclaimed Hugh Lee. Then, in tones and words heroic, thundered: "Tell your father—tell every Tory that you meet, King George will lose his own—the colonies! His lords, his Hessians, his minions, all will be thrown and trampled under Patriot feet, and the land will be our own, and our children's children's own for ages."

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" vociferated his comrades, the cheers being almost deafening.

Captain Hugh now stepped up to Gil Joy, and said:

"You will take that part of the oath relating to this secret retreat—you will swear not to betray us here."

The young fellow did not respond.

"Kill him!" "Kill him!" "He's a traitor!" shouted several voices, and bright knives gleamed in the red glare of the torches, as the line of nine broke in confusion.

Like a lion, Hugh Lee turned upon his crew, crying:

"Who talks of killing here? Sheath those knives at once! You forget yourselves! I command here—you obey!"

Every knife was sheathed in an instant, and not a word was uttered.

Turning upon the spiritless young fellow again, Hugh Lee asked him if he had betrayed their hiding-place.

"No, I haven't," he promptly and with some vehemence responded, his tone and manner satisfying all that he spoke truly.

"Good for you, Gil Joy," said his questioner. "Now swear,

by all your hopes of Heaven, that you never will. Repeat after me."

"I can't—I can't! They might make me!" uttered the craven.

"Ah, ha! they might make you, eh—craven, with a mind of wax and heart of mud? Make you! I swear they never shall! Bind him, boys. Don't be brutes now. He's dangerous at large, but we needn't kill him. Well caged, he will be just as harmless as dead."

Turning to his first mate, the generous but prompt-acting and determined young captain of the privateersmen said, coolly:

"See how the night is, Sim. We'll be off if everything serves."

Sim departed through the inner passage, while Gil Joy was being bound by his fellows—two or three of them.

In ten minutes, during which time Hugh Lee administered the oath to the faithful nine, all was in readiness for the start.

"Don't leave me here alone, Hugh Lee," cried the captive, piteously. "Don't leave me. You may not come back alive."

"Some of us will," curtly responded Hugh.

"I'll take the oath—I'll swear!" screamed the other, in accents of abject fear.

"Not now," was Hugh's only response. "Come, boys, out with the Wagtail."

"If you should all be killed or drowned!" screamed the fear-stricken youth, imploringly, as the thought came in dreadful shape to his mind.

This elicited no response, and the miserable young fellow continued his cries till the Wagtail emerged from her retreat upon the waters of "Bottle Bay," when no further sounds were heard.

Five minutes later, and eyes accustomed to darkness, had they been anywhere near the mouth of the "Bottle," might have seen, creeping therefrom in the black shadow of the high bluff, the Water Wagtail, her muffled oars pulled by sixteen sinewy arms, whose muscles were as hard as iron.

Hugh Lee sat in the bow with a marine night-glass, with which he swept the offing.

"Easy, boys, I've made her out on the starboard bow, well away. It must be her, for there was nothing else out here at sundown, and couldn't have got here since. Larboard lay! we'll sweep under her counter. Sheer, now, to starboard, I can just make her out. Steady—now give way!"

Onward swept the whale-boat over the glass-like surface of the Sound, a few moments sufficing to bring her abreast of, and so close on the schooner, that the patter of the reef-points on the fore and main sails, as the latter feebly flapped from larboard to starboard, were heard by the expectant and ready ears of the crew of the Water Wagtail.

Suddenly, a flash of real fire, emanating from the starboard side of the schooner's deck, amidship, illumined the darkness to the southward; the scope of its glare encompassing the whale-boat and her crew, and bringing into bold and ruddy relief against the northern background of blackness, the sails, spars, and rigging of the fore-and-after, the black waters under the unseen hull reflecting the upper works of the vessel in spectral luminosity.

"What boat's that?" was the instant hail, in sharp and long-drawn nasal tones; supplemented with the cautionary and threatening command: "Keep off er here, or we'll blow ye into kingdom-come in tew jiffy's! Get eout, now, quick!"

"Save your powder, Captain Snow," instantly shouted back Hugh Lee; adding, "we know you. You're for King George, and we are George's men, too—George Washington's, you traitorous Tory, you!" was the undertoned amendment ground out between his hard-set teeth.

CHAPTER II.

THE BURNING SCHOONER AND THE TREASURE CHEST.

"By the god o' battles, Cap'n Hugh," vehemently exclaimed Sim Wales, "they've got her afire!"

"It looks so—they have, by gracious!" Hugh Lee exclaimed, a bright tongue of flame darting up as he spoke, from the fore-castle hatch, as he concluded. "Oars, all!" he cried. "Give way lively; long strokes an' strong strokes, boys. We must board her now."

The whale-boat, which had been brought round stem to the schooner's stern, shot away over the glassy surface of the waters toward the unmistakably burning schooner like a bolt from a catapult, under the powerful propulsion of its sinewy sixteen-arm power.

Brighter and brighter grew the light on the deck of the schooner, the thick smoke which it revealed proving beyond a doubt that the vessel was well on fire forward.

In five minutes or thereabouts, from the moment of starting, the whale-boat swept up under the larboard quarter of the schooner, shooting amidships and bringing to an instant later, when Hugh Lee and Sim Wales, each with a cutlass and big horse-pistol in his belt, clambered over the schooner's side and alighted on her deck.

As our hero and his mate were clambering the port-side of the schooner, they heard the splash of a boat in the water on the starboard-side; and, through the flaming, tinder-like foresail, saw two men go over the side of the burning vessel.

"Starboard-side, boys, lively!" cried Hugh, instantly, to his crew, adding, "they've put off in their boat."

"There's on'y two on 'em!" cried Sim, who had leaped to the starboard-rail, the gaff falling with a crash an instant later; "there's on'y two on 'em, an' the' must be more'n them aboard."

Even as he spoken, a sailor emerged from the cabin companion-way, back foremost, his form bent like one having in hand some bulky or weighty thing to move.

"I'll help you, Jack," said Hugh Lee, stepping up at the moment, extending his hand, and grasping the rope-handle of an ordinary sized chest, such as seamen use, at the two lower corners of which was the chest's owner, Captain Snow, the Tory skipper.

Surprised beyond measure, the seaman let go his hold on the chest, and stepped aside without a word.

Just as greatly surprised was the skipper on the companion-ladder, who, with staring yet glaring eyes, let go his hold, demanding in angry tones not unmixed with alarm:

"Who'n thunder air you, anyhow, mister?"

Hugh Lee, strong as an ox and vigorous as a young lion, with one effort brought the chest, by no means a light one, to the deck, and clear of the booby-hatch.

"You'd better make for your boat, Jack," he immediately said to the astonished sailor. "The schooner's afire, d'ye know it?"

Then to the skipper, who quickly followed his chest to the deck, he said, in a tone of mock dignity, and with some little sarcasm:

"I am Captain Lee, Skipper Snow. You wanted to know who I am—Captain Lee, at your service. (Snake that chest to starboard, Sim,") he interpolated, his mate stepping up at the moment. "Captain Lee—Hugh Lee, in command of the Water Wagtail, of the whale-boat fleet of Long Island Sound, in service of the United Colonies—United Colonies, Skipper! Snow, an' certain-to-be free Colonies. Skipper Snow, in spite of King George's Hessians, or the meaner Tories! But come, your schooner's afire, skipper—whew! see it lick up the mainmast. The main-s'l—there she goes like tinder-rags!"

"What ye goin' to do with my chist?" was the interrogatory response of the Tory skipper, uttered in husky tones of anxiety, as Sim Wales swung the heavy chest to the schooner's rail, the whale-boat being ready to hand.

Hugh, confident from the first that the chest contained treasures, had his confidence strengthened by the almost agonized query of its owner, and replied, as he stepped to the vessel's rail:

"Use what's in it in a good cause, Skipper Snow. Spoils o' war, you know. Prize to the Patriots."

"Robbers! thieves! pirates!" screamed the Tory skipper, in a voice of alarm, and as the chest went over the schooner's side, sprang with all his agility to the rail.

"Lay by with that boat, an' take your skipper aboard!" sang out our hero to those on board the schooner's boat; and stooping, caught up the wretched man, though the latter struggled hard, and quickly threw his feet over the vessel's side, where he held him until the schooner's boat came up, and then let him down into it, the sailor he had called "Jack" following his captain with no little alacrity.

Hugh Lee and his mate then stepped aft a little, and swung themselves over the rail into the whale-boat, the flames now gaining fierce headway, roaring and crackling furiously, and shooting luridly through the thick smoke, fighting the waters far around.

The two boats put off in a flood of light from the burning schooner, the master of the latter raving and moaning, begging and demanding, cursing and threatening by turns, as the rowers pulled from the blazing craft, his men being ordered to follow the whale-boat—a useless order had Hugh desired a speedy parting, as the whale-boat could have made two knots to the other's one.

A few moments, during which time the whale-boat's crew plied their oars moderately, the other boat about two lengths astern, and Hugh cried out, after ordering "oars aback:"

"Come alongside, skipper! Oh, don't howl so! Lay along here, an' hold your hand! I'll do something for you, though you don't deserve it. Starboard oars in," he said to his men, and a moment later, alongside the whale-boat, now motionless on

the flame-reflecting waters, lay the schooner's boat, the despoiled skipper loudly bewailing his loss, and wringing his hands as he glared at his despoiler. "Here," said Hugh, holding out his hand to the captain, "here, take these coined blood-drops. They will keep you and your men thrice over till you get to Newport. When you do get there, remember this night, remember that the way of the Tory is hard, then swear allegiance to the Patriot cause, and you will prosper."

He dropped several shining golden coins into the eager palm of the unhappy skipper, and then ignoring the latter, suddenly asked of one of the sailors:

"Who've you got there?" pointing to something like a human form in the stern sheets, covered with a tarpaulin.

"Dunno, sir; he's a land-lubber, sir," returned the sailor, promptly. "He came aboard jest afore sundown, sir—from Cow Neck, I guess, or thereabouts, sir."

"Cow Neck?" exclaimed Hugh, in a tone of curiosity. "Who can—"

He was interrupted by an oath and a screech from the skipper at this point.

"On'y ten o' my sov'rins—my gold sov'rin's!" yelled the old Tory, in rage, disappointment and disgust. "I won't have 'em—won't touch 'em! Cuss ye—I cuss ye all—fur thievin', murderin', robbin' rebels, and may ye all be gibbeted together, an' I be there to see he hang!"

In a state of frenzy now bordering on madness, the old man sprang to his feet, his eyes glaring at his chest, just forward of the swivel-gun, which was well aft, and in an instant, uttering a strange, indescribable cry, stepped along the gunwale of his boat, and leaped over that of the other, fairly landing upon his beloved treasure-chest, the next instant finding himself in the powerful grasp of Sim Wales, who whirled him, head down and heels up, over the larboard side of the whale-boat, the victim's body making a tremendous splash, striking the smooth water nearly flat, as it did.

"To pickle Tories," said Sim, as the skipper went overboard, "to pickle Tories, fust ketch yer Tories. I've ketched mine, an' if I don't souse him in this 'ere pickle till he's pickled clear through, then I don't know nothin' about picklin' Tories, that's all."

And suiting the action to the word, with his grasp on the collar of the skipper's pea-jacket, he plunged him beneath the surface of the water, silencing his tongue, bringing him up in a moment, sputtering and struggling, dipping him again as soon as he gave tongue; and so alternately he dipped and raised the unconscionable Tory, to the infinite amusement of his comrades.

Hugh Lee, when the Tory skipper went overboard, knowing that Sim would not proceed to extremities, stepped into the schooner's boat, and without any ceremony whatever, pulled off the tarpaulin from the man beneath it, and as he did so, a sharp ejaculation of surprise burst from his lips, as his eyes fell upon the face beneath him, whose features were plainly revealed in the bright light of the blazing coaster,

"By the Lord Harry!" he exclaimed. "By the Lord Harry!" he vehemently repeated, "if here ain't Farmer Joy! Farmer Joy, boys, sure's you live!"

"Farmer Joy!" exclaimed the nine in the whale-boat, as with one voice, and that with infinite surprise, Sim Wales, in his astonishment, letting go his hold of the Tory skipper a foot below the surface of the water, but securing it again when his victim rose.

And upon this combined enunciation of his name, Farmer Joy raised himself from his ignoble position, to a sitting posture at the stern of the boat, looking more like a detected sheep-stealer than an honest tiller of the soil, as he claimed to be. And never a word spoke he.

CHAPTER III.

THE RIVALS MEET.

Ignoring entirely the peculiar and delicate relations existing between himself and the skulking farmer, Captain Hugh peremptorily, yet respectfully, ordered him aboard the whale-boat.

Without a word, Farmer Joy got up and made his way most awkwardly to the whale-boat, after narrowly escaping a plunge into the waters of the Sound.

Hugh Lee quickly followed, wondering what would be the revelation, if any, which the old farmer would make, and what would be the final upshot of the whole matter.

As he stepped aboard his craft, his mate, who had got tired of "sousing" the Tory skipper, sang out to those on board the latter's boat:

"Git round here, ye precious Tories, and git your skipper

aboard. He's pickled clean through from head to foot, an' 'll keep fur a long v'y'ge—longer'n from here to Newport. Come, be lively, or down he goes among the fishes."

The threat had the desired effect, the schooner's boat quickly rounding the stem of the other, and reaching the submerged body of the now sputtering skipper, who caught her gunwhale with one hand, the other tightly clenched upon the ten sovereigns.

As Sim resigned his hold, Hugh Lee gave the command:

"Oars all——"

"Stop, Hugh Lee!" interrupted Farmer Joy, in a sharp, mandatory voice. "Don't ye move an inch from here," he muttered, grasping the knee of Hugh, who sat astride the forward thwart; "not an inch till ye give Cap'n Snow his money. You're a pirate, Hugh Lee, and nothin' but a a pirate, if ye keep his money."

Hugh winced and moved slightly in his seat. To be called a pirate by this man—the father of his betrothed—made him grate his teeth, and caused his blood to tingle, but he said nothing, and the old farmer went on:

"Give him back his money I tell ye, Hugh Lee; on'y give me my gold—my gold!"

"W-h-e-w!" was the long-drawn whistling utterance of Sim Wales: "the old Tory sinner's spit it right out now," and the speaker's voice was not particularly subdued.

"Your gold, Farmer Joy!" quickly exclaimed Hugh Lee, in tones of affected astonishment; "your gold!"

"Cap'n Snow's gold—I didn't say my gold!" cried the farmer, in response, looking the picture of confusion, though struggling to the contrary. He had snared himself beyond escape.

"The's suthin' in-shore thar, Cap'n Hugh, makin out!" cried Sim at this moment. "I ken jest sight it, right abeam here."

Paying no further need to the farmer, Hugh picked up his night-glass, adjusting it as he swept the waters shorewards from the port-bow.

Not a word was spoken, not even by the much exercised Farmer Joy, for a moment or two, as the boat swept swiftly shoreward. Sim strained his naked eyes in the direction he had given, while Hugh's were assisted by the night-glass.

"She's a twelve swivel," said Hugh, at length, still keeping the glass to his eyes, "and I'll soon make her out."

The two boats were rapidly nearing one another, the course of the Wagtail sou-sou-west, the other about nor-nor-west, the latter momentarily becoming more distinct as she came into the circle of light thrown on the waters by the fiercely flaming schooner.

"It's the Moloch," said Hugh Lee, shortly; "fully manned."

"Then the's a race or a scrimmage," quietly remarked Sim Wales, as though it was a matter of the utmost indifference to him which of the two should come to pass.

The name which Hugh Lee had uttered in his ordinary matter-of-fact way, produced a wonderful effect upon Farmer Joy.

He started as though experiencing an electric shock.

"The Moloch—Moloch!" he loudly cried, in accents of surprise and pleasure. "The Moloch—Walt Whyte's boat! Then my gold's safe—safe! Hooray! hooray! an' ye'll be hanged, Hugh Lee—hanged! The Moloch's a-comin', an' my gold is safe!"

"Oho! then it is your gold, eh?" said Hugh Lee, turning in-board and toward Farmer Joy.

"Some on't is. I'd jes lives own up to't now's not, Hugh Lee, ye pirate!" said the farmer, spitefully.

Hugh did laugh outright at this, and laugh heartily.

"Laugh and hang to-morrow, Hugh Lee. Walt Whyte's got more men than you've got, an' ye'll be took, ye pirates, took by the Moloch. Hooray!"

"Tell better bime-by, Farmer Joy," said Hugh, most unconcernedly; then to his crew said: "Back the oars, boys, and save your wind. If there's goin' to be trouble, we'll have it in the light, right about here."

A moment later, and the Water Wagtail lay motionless on the glassy surface of the flame-lighted Sound.

The Moloch, now well within the circle of flame-lighted waters, came rapidly on toward the Patriot boat, her course now nearly due north.

Boat and men could be plainly seen with the naked eye, while our hero with his night-glass was able to make out some of the crew, and clearly distinguish the chief—his own bitter enemy, Walt Whyte.

"I rather guess, Sim, we'll bear down slowly for him," said Hugh, at length, Sim giving the order immediately:

"Head up fur the Moloch—ten strokes!" meaning that number a minute.

"If it's a fight, boys," said Hugh, in a moment, "let's go at it with all the fight that's in us, and win or go to the bottom. The Wagtail's ten against the Moloch's thirteen, win or lose. If he fires, jump to the oars, all, and close in with him, and then—well, a fight for victory or death! Remember, it must be tiger fightin'——"

"Snakes alive!" cried Farmer Joy at this moment, breaking in upon Hugh Lee, who had almost forgotten him during the few preceding moments. "Snakes alive, air ye men goin' ter fight like tigers? Mercy me, what sh'll I do? Put me in Cap'n Snow's boat—do, an' ye may hev the gold—ev'ry suvrin."

Several of the crew laughed heartily and jeered the scared farmer, Sim looking at him with withering contempt.

Hugh Lee, however, looked annoyed and troubled to a degree.

"I wish he was in that boat," he said, and cast his eyes astern.

Sim immediately inclined his body toward him, and said something in a tone so low that Hugh alone could hear.

From the smile that came to the latter's lips, it was evident that the proposition of his mate, whatever it was, had been listened to and favorably received. No particular movement on the part of either followed, both retaining their positions, with their eyes on the approaching foe.

Propelled by twelve oars, whose sweep was long, strong, and steady, the Moloch came rapidly down upon the Water Wagtail, both boats head on.

A few moments and she was within trumpet-hailing distance, and a man standing in the bow shortly hailed:

"Boat a-h-o-y!"

The hail, an unnecessary one, as the Water Wagtail could not be mistaken at the distance, was one of derision and insult—so intended.

"H-u-l-l-o!" trumpeted Sim, in as mocking a tone as possible.

"What boat's that?" came back from the Moloch, in a drawling tone of pretended ignorance.

"The Water Wagtail!" thundered Sim, in a tone of defiance through his trumpet; following with, "What skow is that?"

"The Moloch, ye infernal pirates!" was trumpeted back with sonorous savagery. "S'render, ye dogs, or we'll sink ye to the bottom, an' no quarter fur any one on ye! We're thirteen to ten, an' hev got the biggest gun. We kin blow ye sky high!"

"Don't ye! don't ye! Don't shoot!" screamed the terrified farmer at the top of his voice, throwing his arms imploringly forward, and looking the picture of despair. "Walt—Walt—Walt Whyte!" he again screamed. "Don't shoot, fur Heaven's sake! It's me—it's me—Farmer Joy!"

CHAPTER IV.

BLACK JACK.

When Farmer Joy announced the fact of his presence on board the Water Wagtail, the Moloch came almost instantly to a dead stop, as though of her own volition, and immediately after our hero ordered his men to back their oars, thus bringing his boat almost to a stand-still, a distance of some fifteen fathoms separating the two.

"It's me, Walt, it's me—Farmer Joy!" that person again cried out, in agitated tones.

"Farmer Joy?" interrogatively exclaimed a voice (it was Walt Whyte's) on board the Moloch, in a tone of genuine surprise, which exclamation, after an instant's lapse, was followed by the brusque query:

"How did you come to be on the Wagtail, old man? I thought you was aboard the Eagle."

As no one interfered with Farmer Joy, he cried out, in response:

"So I was; but they——"

The voice of Walt Whyte interrupted him, it being evident from the tone of the speaker that something not previously entertained had suddenly presented itself to his mind.

"Say, is that the Eagle afire there?"

Farmer Joy replied at once:

"Yes, that's her, that's her—oh, my Lord!"

"How'd she get afire?" came from Walt Whyte, in a savage tone, expressive of interest and concern. "Did those sneaking pirates, the Wagtails, burn her?"

Having reached the conclusion, perhaps, that his personal safety would not be jeopardized by either of the whale-boat commanders, owing to the peculiar relation in which they severally stood to him, Farmer Joy, regardless of truth, most indiscreetly replied:

"Yes, they burned an' robbed her—they've got gold o' mine, too."

The outrageous lie was too much for Hugh's equanimity, and he turned angrily upon the falsifier, whom he had allowed up to that moment to have his say.

"Take that back, Farmer Joy—that base lie—or suffer the consequences!" he said, in a determined tone, loud enough to be heard plainly aboard the Moloch.

"I'll do it, I'll do it!" cried the poor, pitiful specimen of manhood. Then throwing his voice toward the Moloch, he said: "Twarn't them—'twarn't Hugh Lee which sot the schooner afire. She got afire somehow or other—I dunno how. I was riled up when I said 'twas him. Don't shoot, Walt—don't shoot!"

The larboard oars of the Moloch flashed in the red light of the flames, dipped, and sent the boat spinning about, and the starboard oars being brought into play, the Tory whale-boat moved shoreward at her best speed—a most remarkable and uncere-monious leave-taking, and quite surprising to those on the Water Wagtail.

"War ye goin', sneakin' off that way, say, Tory skunk?" yelled Sim Wales, derisively, the instant he comprehended the Moloch's purpose. "What ye turnin' tail fur, ye infarnal cowards? H-e-y! leave us a lock o' yer hair to pizen rats with, ye mongrel whelps!"

"We'll meet again another time, you piratical dogs!" came back from the Moloch, Walt Whyte the speaker, his boat rapidly receding toward the shore.

The explanation of the very sudden and mysterious departure of the Moloch was to be found in the fact of the approach of a ten-oared boat, head to head with the Water Wagtail, but as yet unperceived by the crew of the latter, who were all looking over the larboard quarter of the Moloch.

It was the report of a gun at the very instant of Walt Whyte's rejoinder to Sim's taunts that first drew the attention of Hugh and his crew in the direction of the approaching boat, from whence the report emanated.

"Oh, mercy me! Oh, Lord!" shrieked the farmer, in mortal fright, as the report of the gun rang sharply out, dropping to the bottom of the boat, where he sprawled in abject terror, no one heeding him in the least.

"That's the Black Jack, boys," said Hugh an instant later, he having turned his glass upon the stranger the instant after the report of the gun.

As he spoke there came a second report, this time from the Moloch—the answering shot to that fired at her from the Black Jack.

A few moments, and the Black Jack was brought to alongside the Water Wagtail, and close in, the crews of both greeting one another in a semi-cordial way.

"Sighted ye a good bit off, Cap'n Hugh," said the commander of the Black Jack, a Patriot boat, but often disgracing the cause by the outrageous acts of her unscrupulous crew, not excepting her master, for whom she was named, he being known as "Black Jack"—a mere transposition of his legitimate names. "Saw the Moloch comin' up," he went on to say, "an' thinkin' ther' mout be a fight, kinder tho't ez how I'd jine in an' help ye out, Cap'n Hugh. We couldn't ketch her now, could we? No, she's got too big a start, an' twelve oars agoin'."

Here the speaker paused.

Hugh Lee thanked Black Jack for the intention expressed of joining in against the Moloch, had a fight between that boat and the Water Wagtail taken place; but there was no very great cordiality in his tone or manner, for he disliked the man personally, while he severely reprobated the course he pursued as a Patriot whale-boatman, which, as a whole, was far from being justifiable, even under the most liberal view of the exigencies of the troublous times.

"What's that a burnin' yonder?" asked Black Jack, gazing at the blazing coaster.

"A schooner," was the laconic reply.

"Ye don't say so, Smarty Lee," sneered Black Jack. "Some o' ye're own work, I s'pose, Honest Hugh?"

"A mistake o' yours," returned Hugh, carelessly.

"If 't 'adn't bin fur him 'twouldn't a bin afire," interposed Farmer Joy at this moment, speaking in a tone of returning confidence, and getting to his feet.

Sim was upon him in a moment.

"Overboard ye go, ol' man!" he exclaimed; "over ye go ef ye don't hush!" and he caught the farmer by the wrists, pinioned them to his hips, and with very little effort could have pitched him headforemost into the water.

"I won't hush!" he cried, in piping tones. "Ye darsn't throw me overboard when the Patriot Cap'n Black"—a sweet sop to Cerberus; ashore it would have been "Black Jack, the pirate"—"air right here an' would save me."

"Ye mean skunk!" exclaimed Sim with the utmost contempt; "ye man-toad ye, I could sling ye so far over the port rail o'

this boat, that Black Jack couldn't git to the spot afore ye'd gone down—down whar ye'd orter be."

"Ye darsn't, ye villain—ye robber, with Hugh Lee, of my gold! Ye darsn't throw me overboard! Cap'n Black wouldn't 'low ye. Ye darsn't I say!"

Thus dared by the despicable being in his powerful grip, Sim lost all control of himself in an instant.

"Darsn't, eh? I darsn't?" he exclaimed, derisively. "By the god o' battles!" he then roared out, "I dare! Over ye go, ye whelp o' sin, an' the devil, yer foster-father, can't save ye! Ez for Black Jack, he'd cut yer throat fur yer gold!"

Even as he spoke, Sim, who stood with his back to the port-rail, and facing his back to the victim, raised the latter quickly, as though he had been of cork, and at arm's length sent him over his head like a bolt from a catapult, the hapless man speeding headforemost through the air, and plunging thus into the water at an incredible distance from the boat's side.

This feat of Sim's was the action of a man whom passion had robbed of his self-control, and was the work of an instant—like a flash of lightning.

"Sim Wales!" But Hugh Lee, speaking in stern and thunder tones, had no need to say more.

Hardly had the farmer taken his "header" into the glowing waters of the Sound, ere Sim, discarding his hat, leaped to the rail, and, with outstretched arms and fingers nearly touching, dived after him, piercing the water like a sword-fish, and disappearing like a flash.

At the mention by Farmer Joy of his gold, the swarthy countenance of Black Jack was lighted by the suddenly kindled fire that flashed from his glittering coal-black eyes, giving to his face an expression of diabolical cupidity, strengthened by a deadly resolve to accomplish a purpose suddenly conceived.

Hugh Lee caught the first glint from the glittering eyes of Black Jack, and the significance thereof was plain reading to him. Knowing the man—glancing at his face at the moment—he knew what were his suddenly formed intentions; and this knowledge forewarning, forearmed him. His crew, by a private signal from him, was placed upon the alert. But Hugh showed no signs of distrust, preserving his hitherto careless expression of countenance and quiet manner.

"By the great hoss makril!" exclaimed Black Jack, at the instant Sim sent the farmer flying over his head, "but that's the cutest thing I ever seen—never seed anythin' like it afore! Splash!—thar he goes. Ha! ha! ha!"

Upon this he came to his feet, as did Hugh, who ejaculated his mate's name as above noted.

"Who's the ol' feller, Cap'n Hugh?" queried Black Jack, in a feigned tone of indifference, as the head and face of Farmer Joy shot up from the water, the dripping features showing plainly in the light of the flames.

"I guess you'd better ask the gentleman himself, Cap'n Black," returned Hugh. "He'll be aboard in a jiffy." Then aside he said: "Matt, you'n Jake stand by there, an' bear a hand when Sim gits 'longside."

"What is he—crazy, the ol' feller?" again queried Black Jack, with simulated unconcern. "He talked about gold—about you robbin' him o' gold, Cap'n Hugh. He must be crazy, sure. I'd swar to't, ef he said Cap'n Hugh robbed him of his gold!"

This was uttered in a sarcastic tone, and intended as a fling at Hugh Lee, whose course as a whale-boat privateersman was many points wide of the speaker's, by the compass of morality and honor.

Hugh let the covert sneer pass unnoticed, for the utterer, as a man, was beneath his contempt, and as a foe he was not to be despised.

"Where'd ye pick the ol' feller up, Cap'n Hugh? Git him off the burnin' schooner? Ye said it was a schooner, I believe."

As Black Jack uttered these words his eyes, for the first time, fell on the chest of Captain Snow, and there glinted from them a brighter gleam than ever.

"Mebbe that's his chist o' gold," he went on to say as he eyed the chest, the visions of shining coins of yellow gold floating through his brain.

Hugh guessed his thoughts from the gleam in his eye, but to these several queries he vouchsafed no reply, until the former again said:

"He war a passenger on the schooner, I s'pose?" he rejoined, with, "There he comes over the side"—Farmer Joy was being pulled aboard, while Sim was drawing himself up by the rail—"he can tell you all about it, Cap'n Black."

Another moment, and the half-drowned farmer was hauled inboard, Sim quickly following and stepping forward toward Hugh, from whom he had caught a peculiar glance, the significance of which he interpreted at once.

All but two of the crew unshipped their oars and got to their

feet, seeming to be quite interested in the drenched and sputtering farmer—all seeming, however, it was; for they had not risen from any interest they felt in the old man, but at a secret signal from the captain, who anticipated the need of their services.

A moment after Farmer Joy was placed on a seat he found breath and gave tongue.

"Save me! Save me, Cap'n Black! I'll pay ye in gold—they've got my gold in the chist ther! Save me from these pirits!"

Black Jack's eyes sparkled with the fire of demoniacal greed as they again fell on the chest in which he suspected there was gold, while from Hugh's flashed a magnetic glance, caught by every one of his men, who stood watching and waiting for what might transpire.

"Who air ye, ol' man?" queried Black Jack, with insolent disregard of the proprieties which prompted sensible men to mind their own business.

"I'm Farmer Joy, jest outer Hamstead—east," the old man sputtering replied, and got to his feet, the water dripping freely from his saturated clothes.

"Farmer Joy?" Black Jack ejaculated, with mingled surprise and satisfaction. "Then, by the great hoss macril! ye hev got gold, an'—"

"The iron's hot!" cried Hugh Lee, in a ringing tone, breaking in upon the other.

"Strike!" cried his ready men, as with one voice, when there came a rush—a leaping into the air from the Water Wagtail to the Black Jack, of eight flame-lighted forms—followed by a scene of strife of a nature as extraordinary and unlooked-for on the part of the assailed, as it was vigorous and overwhelming on the part of the assailants.

When Hugh rang out his signal shout he sprang upon Black Jack, completely surprising and overthrowing him; then catching him by the neck and rear before he fairly struck the boat, the young Hercules flung the covetous "Hawk" free and clear of, and far over, the port-side of the boat, the victim striking the water with a heavy splash.

His crew were quick to follow his example, and so sudden and impetuous had been the onslaught of the Wagtails, that the Hawks of the Black Jack, completely surprised and thrown off their guard, fell an easy prey to their assailants, going over by twos and threes.

In three minutes the Black Jack was cleared of her entire crew, two of whom went over oars in hand, the Wagtails being in full possession.

"Sling that swivel over, Sim, and all the rest of their tools!" cried Hugh, with great animation; "break the oars, boys! Look out for the Hawks! Stand by to rap their fingers—I ain't ready for 'em to get aboard yet!"

Sim protested against throwing the arms overboard, and proposed to transfer them aboard the Wagtail, but Hugh would not consent.

"Over with 'em, Sim!" he said, firmly; "we're no pirates, and they're no lawful spoils—over with 'em!"

And over went the swivel, and the rest of the arms, and broken were the oars, and rapped were the fingers of the Hawks who grasped the rail, and then the victors in this bloodless but no less effective encounter, regained their own boat and quickly got under way.

As they rowed from the spot, a voice cried out over the waters—a voice of fiendish rage:

"I'll hev yer life fur this, Hugh Lee! Yer life—yer life!" followed by a volley of oaths and curses.

It was the voice of Black Jack, as the latter regained his boat, and sent forth with demoniacal vehemence and accent; the spirits of the night, as they hovered in mid-air, seeming to echo and re-echo with their goblin voices the words of deadly import:

"Your life! Your life!"

CHAPTER V.

BLACK JACK VISITS FARMER JOY.

It was the thirtieth night from that of the singular scene on the Sound.

The hour was about eleven, and in the large and cleanly kitchen of the Joy farm-house, which was closed tight, strong bolts and bars securing windows and doors, sat Farmer Joy, Constance, and Gil.

Suddenly there came a loud triple rap on the back door of the kitchen, and the cry, in negro dialect:

"Fiah! fiah! Fo' de Lord, Marse Joy, de barn am burnin'! Fiah! fiah!"

Constance, who sat not far from the rear door, dashed quickly thither and released the bar.

Instantly the door was pushed open, five men immediately entering, the courageous Constance coolly confronting the apparent leader, who wore a mask of black cloth, the others having their faces blacked.

"Who are you—what do you want?" she quickly demanded, and with a rapid motion of her hand tore the cloth from the face of the nocturnal visitor, disclosing the swarthy features of Black Jack.

With an oath Black Jack pushed Constance aside, and with his followers strode across the polished floor of the kitchen toward Farmer Joy and Gil, the young girl stepping instantly to the open door-way, commanding a view of the barn, which loomed broad and high in the darkness, showing no evidence of being on fire.

"George! George!" she called quickly, and stepped down and out upon the door-stone, one step only.

"Dey make dis ole nigger holler, misses—make him holler fiah, fiah! Dem's bad men, Missy Stancy—gone, gone bad men!"

"Shet up yer head, ye glamed nigger! shet up, or I'll hack yer shins to pieces!" was the gruff admonition following the utterance of the old slave, whose voice had revealed to Constance his whereabouts—some five feet on the right of the door-way, as one entered, and backed up against the house, another form fronting him—that of his guarder.

"Don't you hurt that old darkey—don't you dare to hurt him!" said Constance, in an authoritative tone, shaking her finger at the head of the man, then turning instantly indoors, a greeting of her father's catching her ear at the moment, which made her conclude that matters were not as serious as she had apprehended.

Four or five strides brought the intruders to the spot where stood Farmer Joy and his son.

"It's Black Jack—Cap'n Black!" exclaimed Gil, in a tone of no little apprehension; the more complimentary title following quickly and apologetically the somewhat suggestive sobriquet preceding it, which had slipped unguarded from his tongue.

"Cap'n Black? Oh, Cap'n Black!" enunciated the farmer, in tone and manner most cringing. "Cap'n Black's a gentleman, Gilbert—a gentleman. How d'ye do, Cap'n Black? how d'ye do?" and the servilely civil old man held out his hand to the notorious whale-boatman, professionally a Patriot, but practically a pirate.

Black Jack, on whose face rested a somewhat amused expression, did not refuse the proffered hand of the old man, but grasped it with seeming pleasure, saying:

"I'm pootty well, squire; how's it with yerself? Ye look hearty, an' I'm glad to see ye so."

"I'm toler'ble, Cap'n Black, toler'ble," the farmer responded; then fawningly inquired: "Would ye like a smack o' suthin', cap'n? I've got some cold biled ham, an' ken give a nip o' Hollan's—ye an' yer friends. I know ye would. Gilbert, git some chairs for our friends, an' let 'em git sot down. Stancy—here, Stancy, set out the ham an' things fur Cap'n Black an' his friends, an' I'll git the Schiedam. Set down, cap'n—all on ye set down."

And the exceedingly officious old man, hoping to favorably impress his unwelcome guests, whose purpose he darkly surmised, turned to a cupboard over the spacious fire-place, where he kept his jug of Hollands, to get the potent beverage with which to regale the intruders whom, no doubt, he wished at the bottom of the Sound, or on the peak of Teneriff—anywhere but where they were.

Constance, who, until that moment, had gazed at the intruders with angry eyes, her teeth tightly set, changed her demeanor instantly, and vivaciously said, in response to her father's command:

"Yes father, I'll get the things right away." Then to the unwelcome guests in her blindest tones she said: "Sit down, gentlemen. I'll have everything ready in a minute or two, and you'll find the ham splendid, and the pickles, too. Sit down."

Evidently she was prompted to this graciousness by some suddenly conceived ulterior purpose, and not by a desire to propitiate the intruders, as was the case with her father.

Never was our heroine so blithe and sprightly as on this most unusual occasion. Never did she set the table so well and quickly for a party of seven—there were five unbidden guests in the house, and another of the party outside, and she intended to have her father seated at the table—and Black Jack and his four followers had barely gulped their potations of Hollands, when she announced the repast, and with a courtesy and captivating smile, inviting Black Jack to a seat at the table, not slighting his companions, who did not wait to be urged, but seated themselves at once, the chief himself entering into the spirit of the occasion, and taking a seat as though nothing weightier than that homely spread occupied his mind. He

evidently thought that the way to the consummation of his purpose was easy, and so accommodated himself to circumstances wholly unexpected.

"Sit down, father," said Constance, gayly, pulling back a chair next to Black Jack; "sit down and keep your friends company," and the old man seated himself.

"Oh, there's another outside!" the young girl exclaimed, as though the thought had that instant flashed to her mind; and then she tripped to the rear door, never so gay and free from care before—to all appearances.

"Come in! come in!" she said, as she stepped outside, addressing the man guarding the negro. "Come in and join your friends. Captain Black and the others are eating and drinking, and father with them. He and the captain are the best of friends. Go in and get your share."

There was audible evidence of a repast being partaken of in a friendly way within, and these, together with the cordial invitation of the young girl, convinced the fellow, desirous as he was of participating in the exercises of the table, that he was justified in leaving his charge and entering the kitchen, which he did at once, hearing Constance sharply command the negro to go to his quarters, as there was no trouble, the call at the farmhouse being a friendly one.

The fellow was nicely hoodwinked; for had he returned an instant later he would have seen Constance intercept the negro whom she had so sharply ordered to his quarters. Had he been close enough to the pair, he would have heard her ask, in a whisper of most earnest concern:

"Where's Long Jim?"—the other and younger slave—and the reply:

"He done gone over to Hem'sted, missus—les' he got back since dem devils toted dis ole nigger ober yere, an' made him holler fiah."

"Go quick and see, George!" then said Constance, in a whisper, speaking quickly and earnestly. "If he is not at home, get over to Captain Lee's as quick as your feet can carry you. If Hugh is not at home—oh, dear! I'm afraid he isn't—tell Captain Lee that Black Jack is here——"

"Fo' de Lord! am dat him?" ejaculated the negro, in tones of fear, shaking all over.

"Yes, that's him," said Constance. "Now you know we want help. Get it somewhere if you care for me, George."

"Fo' de Lord, I does, Miss Stancy. You am de angel ob——"

"Go! go! run—fly, George!" whispered the young girl, pushing the old slave on his way, and moving toward the door.

"Oh, dear! if Hugh is not at home, what shall we do? I'm sure Captain Lee would not lift a finger to help us. Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven!"

These were the thoughts of Constance as she stepped toward the house, her brother coming out at the moment, the two meeting just off the door-stone.

"Go back! go back!" she earnestly whispered; "they'll miss you and be suspicious. I've sent for help, so go back. Go carelessly—whistle! I'll sing—go in."

Thus did the young girl command, and without a word was she obeyed.

A moment after her brother's entrance, in she tripped, a blithe-some carol coming bird-like from her fair throat as she approached the now quite festive board (the Hollands circulated lively) from which she had gone hardly two minutes, her absence not having been noticed; thanks to the eager desire of the intruders to get hold of the old farmer's jug of schnapps.

As Black Jack had been satisfied when his fifth man told him, upon entering, that Constance had sent the old negro off to his quarters, things remained in *statue quo*, so to speak. How long they would remain so was uncertain. It was the calm before the storm.

Time—time was what Constance desired; and a song would take more or less time. She would sing an hour—two—till daylight, if they would listen to her. Consequently, when she was requested to sing, she did not let diffidence stand in her way, as ordinarily it might have done.

"Now," said Farmer Joy, "Stancy'll sing, an' ye'll hear music."

"Music!" sharply ejaculated the swarthy captain, a sardonic smile revealing slightly his tobacco-stained teeth. "Music!" he repeated; "yes, ther's goin' ter be music here! Bill," addressing one of his men, "shet that door! Abe, ye look out fur the gal an' the boy—an' ye too, Sam, ef Abe ain't enough. They mustn't run out an' ketch the fever'n'agy, yer know."

The speaker then turned to Farmer Joy. The crisis was at hand.

"Now fur the music, squire," said Black Jack, rubbing his hands; adding, with a vivacious insolence: "The jingle o' British yaller, boys—that's the music fur me! Git out what you've got on 'em—quick, now, an' save trouble all round!"

Black Jack's purpose was now fully revealed, and the tone in which he spoke was one not to be misunderstood. He had come for gold. If it was to be had, he would have it, no matter to what length he might be compelled to go.

"Mercy me, Cap'n Black!" exclaimed Farmer Joy, a cold sweat oozing from his pores; "ye must be jokin'——"

"No, I ain't jokin'," interrupted Black Jack; "I'm in 'arnest, an' ye'll find it out. Come, bring out yer gold."

"Oh, dear! oh, Lord!" ejaculated the farmer, quaking with horror at the thought of being robbed; "I thought ye was a gentleman, an' not a pirate like Hugh Lee, who robbed me of all my gold!"

"Father!" exclaimed Constance, in a tone of mingled indignation and denial, unable to restrain her feeling, looking with reproachful eyes at her parent.

"Cuss Hugh Lee! cuss him!" exclaimed Black Jack, knitting his black brows and grating his strong yellow teeth, the memory of that night on the sound stirring his devilish nature to its very depths.

"So I say, cap'n, so I say!" put in the farmer, he and the other, in regard to Hugh Lee, meeting on common ground—that of hate.

"But he didn't steal all yer gold, squire," was the dampener from the freebooter. "Ye've got lots more on't it, so out with it, or it'll be the wuss fur ye."

"Oh, dear! oh, Lord! I hain't got non'?" screamed the farmer, in tones of mental anguish, the imperious demand for his gold causing him a terrible shock.

"Here, Tim," said Black Jack to one of his men, evidently resolved to resort to forcible measures at once; "here, hold the lyin' old cuss tight to the chair. I'll see 'f he ain't got no gold."

Quickly stooping as he spoke, he brought one of the old man's bared feet to the table.

"Eph," said the freebooter to another, "hold that candle to the ol' man's toes—warm 'em up fur him."

Eph promptly obeyed his chief, and the candle was held to the sole of the old man's foot.

Faintly the victim struggled, and loudly he screamed with pain—only for an instant, however, for the rough palm of the scoundrel who held him was pressed hard upon his mouth.

"Stop! stop, you monster, stop!" shrieked Constance, in horrified accents. "Take away the candle, and you shall have all the gold in the house! Oh, such horrible monsters!"

Black Jack motioned the candle away.

"Git it out—the gold," he said, with devilish calmness.

"Get it, Gilbert, get it!" cried Constance, in a mandatory tone of surprising firmness. "Get it, and let these monsters begone with their booty."

Believing that the aim of the scoundrels was plunder, nothing more heinous being contemplated if they secured it, emboldened her to speak thus severely.

Gil, with one of the scoundrels at his side, went to the spacious fire-place, almost high enough for him to walk into without stooping, and reaching up the chimney, shortly produced a small brown crock, which he carried to the table, the sight of which called up a deep sepulchral groan from the breast of his father, whose mouth was still covered.

"There's all the gold, all the money in the house, every shilling!" exclaimed Constance, as her brother placed the crock on the table. "Turn it out," she said to Gil, "turn it out, and let the brutes see the whole of it."

Gil turned the crock upside down, and out came its contents of gold and silver—sovereigns and halves of the first mentioned metal, crowns and halves, shillings and sixpences of the second.

Black Jack now seated himself to ascertain the amount in the small pile of gold and silver before him, by far the larger number of coins being of the baser metal.

"Forty-two pound', sixteen 'n' sixpence," said Black Jack, finishing the count, and feeling in the crock, as he spoke, for more.

"And little good may it do you!" exclaimed the undaunted Constance, her eyes flashing like sparkling coals.

"Thet all ther is in the house?" queried Black Jack, in a sneering tone of incredulity, casting at the courageous young girl a lecherous glance, accompanied with an insulting smirk.

"I told you it was every shilling, you monster!" returned Constance.

"Forty-two poun', sixteen 'n' sixpence," he said, communing with himself. Then, turning to Farmer Joy, said: "'Tain't enough fur the risk, squire. We'll hev ter take ye along fur ransom money. Or I kan swap ye off fur some one in the lines o' the Britishers, and turn a honest penny. Git him in trim, boys, an' fix the other ones."

The man who stood over Farmer Joy brought him to his feet at once, while another, producing some strong spun-yarn, or

marine, proceeded to bind the old man's arms behind him, they being held by the first-mentioned ruffian, who threatened to kill if the victim uttered any cries.

"Are you going to take my father away?" demanded Constance of Black Jack. "You shall not do it, you monster! You shall not!"

Black Jack gazed at her for an instant, when, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he exclaimed:

"By the great hoss mackril, I won't! I ken do better. Ye can't raise his ransom money es quick an' sartin es he ken raise yourn. We'll take the girl, boys!" and a lecherous fire glinted from his coal-black, baleful eyes.

"No you won't, not if you mean my sister!" exclaimed Gil Joy, for the first time displaying any spirit, as he stepped to the side of Constance.

It was a redeeming point in his favor, but it brought him to instant grief, he being felled to the floor immediately by one of the myrmidons of Black Jack.

The ruffian who had struck her brother down, at a sign from his leader, reached out to grasp the person of our heroine; but, quick as a flash, she caught up from the table the Holland jug, and with a strength in her right arm enhanced fourfold by excitement, swung it with unerring aim against the ruffian's head, felling him to the floor like a stricken ox, his head drenched with the pungent liquor, and bleeding copiously from wounds caused by the jagged edge of the broken jug.

Hurling what remained of the jug in her hand instantly at the head of Black Jack, the nozzle of the fragment striking it, inflicting no great harm, Constance sprang toward a door leading into another apartment, between which and herself stood none of the ruffians.

She reached and opened it, and disappeared before a movement was made to follow her, so surprisingly quick had been her motions.

"Git arter the she tiger!" fiercely roared Black Jack, in an instant. "Git arter her quick—she'll be outer the house!"

Before a man started—before the last word was off his lips—Constance reappeared in the door-way with a blunderbuss, or musketoon, in her hands; and if the human face divine ever showed determination, human eyes ever flashed with the fire of sudden and stern resolve, then did the face and eyes of Constance Joy.

Cowardly cur as he was at heart—brave only when circumstances made him master of the situation—Black Jack seized Gil Joy, at that instant rising from the floor in a confused state, and held him with an iron grip in his front, a shield for himself and one of his myrmidons, who quickly got in his rear.

And Farmer Joy was almost as quickly interposed between the ruffians who held him, and his daughter, who, with the musketoon threateningly in hand, looked the goddess of vengeance about to strike.

"Be keerful how ye shoot," jeeringly cautioned Black Jack. "Be keerful, cos yer father 'n' brother must feel kinder ticklish jest now."

And the craven peered from behind the neck of his human shield.

"Oh, such monsters, and yet such cowards!" exclaimed Constance, with impassioned scorn, her lip curling, and her eyes flashing with disdainful fire!

Two steps into the kitchen she moved, the barrel of the musketoon grasped in her left hand, while her right clutched the breech at the lock. Certain it was that she was familiar with the handling of the weapon.

The scoundrels in the rear of her father and brother, respectively, kept them in their exact front, facing her.

She could have moved quicker than the cowardly wretches with their safe-guards, but to fire would have exposed her relatives to too great a risk.

She stood a moment and thought.

"I can keep them here, who knows how long? It is disagreeable for father and Gil, but better that than worse. The cowards dare not move out of line of their respective safe-guards. I can hold them and gain time. Oh, that somebody—oh, that Hugh would come! If alone, even, he would sweep these cowards from his path! Oh, Heaven send him! Heaven send him!"

Thoughts to this effect rushed through the brain of the brave young girl. And there she stood, musketoon in hand, or rather mistress of the situation.

For a moment or two after her exclamation of invective and scorn, Constance stood like a statue, no one either speaking or moving.

Suddenly the miscreant on the floor, felled and stunned by our heroine, recovered consciousness. He raised himself on his elbow, and glanced confusedly about from one eye, the sight of the other being obscured by clotted blood.

"Lie down!" cried Constance, slightly raising the musketoon, and pointing its wide and wicked muzzle at the blood-be-smeared ruffian. "'Lie down, and keep still, or you'll die right there!'"

The man stared at her for an instant through his unobscured eye, and doubtless concluding that it would be dangerous to trifle under the circumstances, yielded to discretion that his valor might avail him another day.

He had hardly disposed of himself as bidden, when Gil Joy, by a sudden and violent effort, doubtless thinking he was acting for the best, tore himself from the grasp of Black Jack, which had probably relaxed somewhat, and threw himself flat upon the floor.

A vivid flash, a thunderous report, a sharp crash instantly followed the action of the young man, a cloud of sulphurous smoke filling the apartment.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR HEROINE BOUND, GAGGED, AND ABDUCTED BY BLACK JACK.

Constance had fired the musketoon at Black Jack the instant he became exposed, two five-ounce iron balls speeding from the flame-belching, vicious muzzle of the piece, and after a brief screaming whistle, crashing into and raking with a sharp clatter, the wall beyond the fire-place, in the rear of the scoundrel named.

And this was the result of the shot—the raking of the wall—if we except a slight wound on the right shoulder of the ruffian immediately behind Black Jack, one of the iron missiles just grazing that portion of his frame as it passed, the arch-villain escaping all harm.

Enveloped in the sulphurous smoke, Constance stood for a brief instant as though paralyzed.

Suddenly she staggered, the musketoon fell from her hands, and down to the floor she fell like one bereft of life.

Nature had given way, unable longer to bear the intense strain to which it had been subjected. With the explosion of the musketoon, her nerves, strung to the highest degree of tension, had suddenly relaxed, when she fell limp and lifeless to the floor.

Danger to his precious person no longer threatening, Black Jack became himself again, and brave as he ever was when he could lord it with impunity.

The scoundrel stepped to the spot where Constance lay prone upon the floor, and with a smile of diabolical satisfaction, he stooped and shook her by the shoulder.

"She's gone off inter a faintin' fit, I guess," he musingly uttered. "Ef she'll on'y stick to it, we won't hev no trouble with her—won't hev no trouble nohow, fur she'll be tied hand 'n' foot, an' gagged. I'll tie her myself, now. Gimme some spun-yarn there, some o' ye," he called out, being immediately supplied with what he wanted.

In five minutes the scoundrel had the brave, beautiful, and now unconscious girl tied, as he had said; her hands behind her back, and a wooden wedge pressed between her teeth, a string passing round the neck, securing the gag against displacement.

Rising then, the black-browed, swarthy miscreant looked down upon his victim for a moment, as a fiend incarnate might have looked in a moment of triumph.

Black Jack ordered one of the folding doors of the cupboard to be torn from its hinges and brought over to him, which order was quickly obeyed.

Upon this door he placed the inanimate form of Constance, and all was now ready for their departure; a moment later, four men, with their insensible human burden, together with the wounded ruffian, passed out of the house into the silence and darkness of night, with no one to say them nay, passed out and off in the direction of the Sound, leaving Black Jack behind them.

This precious scoundrel immediately barred the door, looked to see that his victims were securely bound, took up a tin lamp that was burning on the mantel, and passed out of the kitchen to find the way to the story above, which he found readily. Ascending to the loft—it was nothing else—he glanced quickly about, blew out the light, and groping to the window nearest him, at the end of the house, raised it, and swung himself out, falling lightly to the ground after hanging a second.

And away into the darkness he sped to overtake his men.

CHAPTER VII.

A RAVEN WITH A HAWK'S BEAK.

The Water Wagtail, with her gallant young commander and a full crew—the place of Gil Joy having been filled—was out upon the Sound on the night when Black Jack and his ruffians so atrociously maltreated the members of the Joy household, crowning their villainous work by the ruthless abduction of Constance.

The boat had left its haven at Bottle Bay about an hour after sundown, the evening being moderately dark, and the waters smooth.

The expedition on which they were now engaged was the capture or boarding of a coaster—on this occasion a sloop—for sometime engaged in supplying the British naval vessels with wood and provisions, and hailing from New London, Conn.

The pull was a very long one, away eastward of Eaton's neck, and a good stretch over toward the Connecticut shore; and while the expedition was successful, the coaster being boarded, the Tory skipper relieved of his ill-gotten gains, and no accident or incident occurring of an unusual nature, nothing near as much was realized as from the skipper of the Eagle—twenty-seven pounds and eleven shillings being the amount secured.

But Hugh Lee's philosophy always sustained him in the event of a light harvest, no grumbling from vexation or disappointment ever being heard from him; and the crew of the Wagtail took the cue from their leader, accepting what they got with a very good grace, even if but a tithe of what they hoped for.

"It don't matter whether it's one poun' or forty," Hugh would say, "so it's all the Tory skunks have got. It makes 'em sore to be stripped clean, an' cripples 'em jes' so much when they come to buy another lot of stuff for the Britishers. An' it scares their Tory friends who send stuff in their vessels, too. If we get all they've got, one poun' or forty, I'm satisfied."

Propelled by twelve oars wielded by double that number of sinewy arms, the Water Wagtail sped like an arrow toward the Long Island shore, which ere now loomed black and high in the semi-obscurity of the night.

The burst of speed at which the whale-boat left the sloop was not maintained for more than ten minutes, however, the rowers falling to an easy, swinging stroke that drove the boat at no snail's pace over the glassy waters.

There was no hurry, nothing to prompt the crew to any considerable exertion, and as their haven could easily be reached long before daylight, the rowers took it easy, and sang as they rowed, as though there was naught in the troublous times or their tumultuous lives to dampen their natural flow of spirits.

For an hour and more the crew of the Wagtail lazily rowed and sang, and lazily sang as they rowed, when Lloyd's Point loomed on the larboard hand, distant about half a mile, and "Bottle Bay" no great distance away.

At this point, as if by common consent, the singing ceased, and the boat was more swiftly propelled toward her haven, the course a diagonal one across the mouth of Oyster Bay.

Lloyd's Point had only fairly been left astern, when Hugh Lee, at the bows with his night-glass, suddenly ejaculated, in a low tone:

"Port sheer—steady! Give way lively, boys!" the reason for these commands coming a moment later: "There's a boat on the port-bow, inshore, headin' as though to run the point. We'll see who she is. Give her a 'bone,' boys"—meaning a speed that would churn the water into foam at the boat's bows—"they're gettin' along lively, an' we must head 'em off."

The Wagtail seemed to leap along the water under the powerful impetus given by twenty-four strong arms in full and united action; and a very few minutes sufficed to bring her within hailing distance of the stranger.

"Boat ahoy!" hailed Hugh, with blunt earnestness.

"Hullo!" came back, in a gruff tone.

"What boat's that? Who are ye?"

"The Raven," was the reply from the stranger, sheering off, evidently not disposed to tarry, her eight oarsmen bending with a will to their oars, and no inquiry concerning the hailing boat being made.

If they hoped on board the Raven—a Patriot boat—to elude the outlying boat, they hoped vainly, for the Wagtail could have been rowed in a circle around them continuously.

"Bring to, then, if that's the Raven!" cried Hugh, in a mandatory tone; "I want to see Captain Ray—Dick Ray. An' bring to, if ye ain't the Raven. I want to see who ye are."

"Dick Ray ain't aboard ter-night," came from the alleged

Raven, in a ruffled tone, superinduced, probably, by the maneuvering of the Wagtail, which constantly kept in the other's course.

"No, I guess he ain't," muttered Hugh Lee, deridingly; "an' I guess he never *was* aboard o' that boat. Now, ye bring to, or I'll run ye down!"

He was satisfied that it was not the Raven.

"Yeou'd better give us a wide berth, or I'll fire into yeou!" was returned, in a harsh, strained voice, unnatural in its tones.

"If that's your game, two ken play at that," cried Hugh, contemptuously. "S'posin' ye lead; I'll follow suit or trump, ye may depend."

The stranger did not "lead," but came quickly round and bore to the north, the eight oarsmen doing their utmost.

"Ye fools!" cried Hugh, with contempt; "do eight o' ye think to git away from twelve? Give way, boys, an' show 'em what ye're made of!"

Our hero then made his way to the swivel.

In three minutes the Wagtail was within four times her length of the other, and would foul her, if each held her course, just abaft the beam.

"Bring to!" cried Hugh, "or I'll cut ye in two!"

A flash was the response, lighting for an instant the immediate surrounding darkness, followed by a ringing report, and the scream of hurling iron as it cut the air. The swivel of the stranger had been discharged.

"By the Lord Harry!" exclaimed Hugh, as an iron slug whistled just above his head, "but that was close enough. I'll see if I can shoot as *well*."

This last was loudly uttered, as he stooped to sight his swivel.

"Ef yeou fire on us," exclaimed a voice from the other boat at this instant, "yeou mought kill somebody ye moughtn't want to kill, Captain Hugh Lee."

Hugh started bolt upright at these words.

"By the Lord Harry, that's Black Jack's voice!" he exclaimed, in a suppressed, yet vehement tone, a suspicion, sickening and full of horror, flashing itself to his brain.

"By the god o' battles!" ejaculated Sim Wales, in the very same breath of time, "ef that ain't that air skunk uv a Black Jack I'll eat skunk-weed all the rest o' my life!"

There was no mistaking the voice. It was Black Jack's beyond the shadow of a doubt. All aboard the Wagtail were satisfied of that.

"Who can he have aboard, the cowardly cur, that I need be afraid o' hurtin'—that gives him the courage to dare me?" Hugh asked himself; and again the sickening, horrifying suspicion forced itself to his mind.

"That air's a trick o' his'n, Cap'n Hugh," said Sim Wales, in a tone of thorough conviction, speaking while Hugh was thinking, and continuing: "He's jest up to that air bizness, ez cunnin' ez he is mean, part fox an' part fitchet, an' the rest rattlesnake; thet's what he is. I'd give him a dose afore he lets fly at us ag'in, if I was you."

This last was uttered in a tone moderately loud, while his estimate and setting forth of Black Jack's character and genealogy were loud enough uttered to be heard by the scoundrel he characterized, who, doubtless, did hear.

"No, no, Sim, it's no trick," said Hugh, who at the moment was engaged in pouring some powder from a canister upon a piece of sheet-iron, a lighted lantern near him under the swivel.

He was arranging for a flash-light, there not being any torch-wood aboard, owing to an oversight of Sim's.

"It's no trick," he went on to say; "the cur wouldn't take the chances o' that trick. He's got somebody aboard, depend, that he knows I wouldn't run the risk o' killin'; I can't guess who."

He didn't dare to guess who. To suspect whom it might be was torture enough; to guess would be agony.

As he ceased speaking, Hugh sprinkled the powder with water from a bucket in the stern-sheets, and passed the iron on which it lay to Sim, who, generally pulling an oar, was a fourteenth man, at liberty this night, and, at the moment, near by Hugh, who said:

"Set that a blazin' when I say the word," and stepped to the larboard side of the swivel and gazed at the black form of his foe's boat, now only two lengths ahead, though the eight rowers had made the most desperate efforts to escape their pursuer, whose power was by no means fully employed.

"Keep off, good Cap'n Lee, keep off!" cried Black Jack's voice, in jeering tones. "Keep off, or ye'd wish ye hed. Don't play yer keards, good Cap'n Lee, 'cos I've got the best hand, an' —"

"Now, Sim," interrupted Hugh Lee, and the next instant the darkness in the vicinity of our hero was illumined by a sudden sputtering flash, the dampened powder having been ignited.

It died out nearly, but another and greater flash succeeded, as more powder ignited; and the fleeing boat and its occupants

were distinctly revealed; all doubts, if any existed, concerning the presence of Black Jack, being dissipated at once.

There in the stern, by the starboard rail, he stood, and in his arms, right in his front, a female form—whose, the reader need not be told—facing outward and toward our hero.

"Great Heaven! it is Constance Joy!" exclaimed Hugh, in a panic of amazement and horror, standing like one paralyzed by a brain shot.

"Y-e-s, it's her, good Cap'n Lee; it's her!" said Black Jack, in the exasperating tone of a dastard who exults in a mean advantage, "It's her—your gal—an' she's tied hand an' foot, an' gagged, an' if ye come any nearer, over she goes ez fur ez I ken chuck her to port, an' afore ye git her she'll go down an' we'll be off. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Devil!" ejaculated Hugh Lee, grinding his teeth. "Devil!" he repeated, this time vociferously. "Why did ye seize her? For ransom? Deliver her up to me, an' name the sum ye want. If it ain't set where ye know I can't reach it, ye shall have it, I swear!"

For an instant there was no response. A profound silence prevailed. The rowers on both sides had ceased their exertions, and the boats moved only from the impetus they had received, their positions remaining unchanged.

Black Jack at length responded to our hero.

"Wal," said he, in a drawling tone of mockery, "a thousand British yaller boys—suvrins—'ll bring the gal. She's dog cheap at that. Is't a bargain?" And the villain followed this with a sardonic laugh.

A thousand sovereigns!—a thousand pounds sterling! Hugh Lee might possibly raise a hundred! If that was the ransom, then by ransom he never could release the girl he loved from the hands of the scoundrel who held her—never!

Nevertheless, after an instant's hesitation, he declared it a "bargain," if Constance was released to him at once. He knew he could not raise the sum, but reasoned that, to circumvent the nefarious villain, he was justified in using any means to the end he might choose.

"I want the rhino right down, good Cap'n Lee! No tick here," returned Black Jack, who, confident that he could keep Hugh Lee at bay, relaxed his grip upon Constance, and supported her fettered form by one hand upon her shoulder, still keeping her in his front.

The case was desperate, and Hugh Lee resolved instantly upon desperate action. This was to drive in upon the other boat, with all suddenness and velocity, believing he could rescue Constance even from the water, bound as she was, into which he doubted Black Jack would cast her.

The understood signal, when a *coup de main* was resolved upon by Hugh, "The iron is hot," was on his lips. when it was arrested by the extraordinary action of one of the crew of the Black Jack.

This man leaped like a panther upon his chief, hurled him backward, caught Constance in his arms, sprang to the starboard rail, and with his living burden leaped into the water as far as he could toward the Wagtail.

"Give way! give way!" cried Hugh, at once, in a tone of great relief and joy, leaping into the water as he spoke, and striking out for his betrothed, not pausing to think that this act was hardly necessary under the circumstances.

At that instant the light from the flashing powder went out for good and all, but Sim had had all the lanterns lighted by one of the crew, and these, eight in number, afforded a fair light, which was at once directed toward those in the water, right upon whom two strokes of the oar brought the boat.

"Back water," cried Sim. "Steady! Larboard oars aboard. Stand by, an' bear a hand here to git 'em aboard!"

His orders were quickly carried out, and with two men to each person in the water, the three were quickly lifted into the boat; the man who had jumped overboard from the Black Jack, now speeding away, proving none other than Sol Blake, at whose head his late chief was hurling anathemas and imprecations of the most appalling nature, with threats the direst possible, Hugh Lee not escaping.

"The scoundrel!—the fiend!" exclaimed Hugh, as he came over the rail. "Give chase, Sim. You have the boat now. I've other matters in hand."

And he turned at once to Constance with his attentions.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAWK SNARED, SLAIN, AND PLUCKED.

Nothing could have suited Sim better. He was in command of the boat, could do as he wished, and the Black Jack, with her atrocious captain, was before him, speeding away, but not yet lost in the darkness, and certain to be overhauled if the attempt

was made. "Starboard oars, there!" he called out, decisively, the boat's bow swinging round on the starboard hand. "Steady!" he cried, as the stem pointed directly toward the departing boat; then, in stirring tones, "Give way, lads! give way lively! They say a starn chase is a long chase, but this won't be very long, I guess. Now, bend to it! That's it—aha! she leaps like a catamount!"

"Bang!" went the swivel, the shrieking of the iron slugs being followed by the yells and oaths of wounded men, and the crashing and tearing of Sundered wood.

"Larboard oars now!" cried Sim, instantly. "Steady! Now break them oars—break 'em, I say!"

Like a bolt from a catapult the Wagtail shot toward the Black Jack, which was doomed to a certainty.

Like one man pulled the twelve, and one stroke more—hal! they bend for it, take the water, and drive the Wagtail's stem into the Black Jack's quarter with a crash and crunch, cutting her nearly to the water's edge.

"Oars aback!" cried Sim. "Starboard oars now—larboard in—steady!" and the Wagtail in a moment lay alongside and grappled with the Black Jack, four of whose crew leaped overboard as Sim, with ax and lantern in hand, followed instantly by six of the crew, some with lanterns and weapons, and some with the latter only, leaped aboard the doomed boat to complete the work.

"Here's Black Jack, dead's a door nail!" cried one of the Wagtail's men at the instant.

Sim stepped aft and found the man's words to be true. In the bows, on the port side, lay the lifeless body of the freebooter, the death wound being in the head, a slug having struck him just under the left ear and passed out just behind the right ear.

Two of the crew of the Black Jack, all that remained aboard, were found to be wounded, and were quickly transferred to the Wagtail.

Then Sim ordered the prize to be cleaned of everything of any use, and to be chopped to a complete wreck, and while the first part of the order was being carried out, he searched the clothes of the dead pirate, reaping a greater reward than he had expected by far. He got the money Farmer Joy had been robbed of, and some more besides.

When everything useful had been removed from the Black Jack, and the work of wrecking her commenced, he was ready to take a hand in it, and quick and thorough was the work of destruction; the wreck, coffin, and shroud of the late commander, sinking to its gunwale, to be broken to splinters by the first storm.

And now to Constance and Hugh.

Immediately after giving up the boat to Sim, our hero turned his attention to his betrothed, as before said.

With muttered imprecations on the head of Black Jack, he quickly cut the bonds that confined the ankles of the young girl, Sol Blake relieving her of the torturing gag, and both cutting the marline that bound her hands behind her back.

Hugh did the best he could to cheer and comfort her on the way shoreward, hearing from Sol Blake the story of the dastardly proceedings of Black Jack a few hours previous at the Joy farm-house.

It was yet dark when the Wagtail shot into Oyster Bay, and at a point on the south-west landed Hugh Lee and Constance Joy, together with Sol Blake; the two wounded men of the Black Jack, able enough to walk, being set ashore nearer the bay's outlet, the Wagtail then proceeding to her haven at "Bottle Bay," arriving there without further incident, after a night which would ever be remembered by one of the participants in its scenes and incidents—Constance Joy.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSTANCE IN PERIL.

A year passed.

It was on the evening of September 2d, just one week subsequent to the battle of Long Island, that Hugh Lee was leaving his home for the rendezvous of the Wagtails at "Bottle Bay."

He had just passed the boundaries of the farm, when he was met by a tall negro who had been going along the road, and who now stopped right in his front, breathing hard and saying nothing, though the whites of his eyes seen plainly in the twilight, spoke volumes, if only they could be understood.

"Well, Jim,"—"Long Jim" it was, the younger of the two blacks of Farmer Joy—"what's the trouble—anything?"

The black at length responded, but not before he had bent himself nearly double, straightening then to a perpendicular position, with a tremendous respiration, half grunt and half sigh.

"Dis chile dunno what am de trubbel, Marse Hugh, but dar's

trubbel shuah ober yander," pointing in the direction of the Joy farm, "but dis chile dunno nuffin what it am, on'y—"

"Only what?—what, you black rascal?" impatiently demanded Hugh, breaking in upon the black.

"I war jes' a-gwine to tell ye, Marse Hugh—jes' a-gwine to tell ye."

"Tell, then—tell quick, ye black idiot, an' don't stand there saying ye was 'jes' a-gwine to?" exclaimed Hugh, hotly, his impatience greatly augmenting.

"Missy Stancy! Missy Stancy!" ejaculated the black, with sudden vehemence; "she done gone woeful bad, Marse Hugh—woeful bad. She want you right smart ober dar, Marse Hugh—right smart—I know she do. Dis chile he run all de way ober yere. Trubbel dar shuah, Marse Hugh."

Hugh had learned enough—Constance was in trouble. Particulars he cared nothing for—he couldn't have got them from the black if he had.

"Go back quick—run!" he commanded, "an' tell your mistress I'll be there. Run, now, run. Don't lope like a sick dog!"

And what was going on at the Joy farm-house? In what trouble was Constance?

Why, there was a wedding to come off that evening at the Joy farm-house. And Constance Joy was the bride-elect! And the groom-elect—who was he but Walt Whyte?

By some means best known to themselves, Farmer Joy and Walt Whyte had wrested from Constance that very afternoon her consent to be wedded to a man she loathed, and loving another with all her soul!

It was nine o'clock, and in the parlor of the Joy farm-house, a room fronting the kitchen, were gathered seven persons, actors in and spectators of the tragedy about to be enacted; the actors—parties of the first and second parts—Walt Whyte and Constance Joy; the minister, a subsidiary actor; the spectators, Farmer Joy, Gil Joy, and two friends of Walt Whyte.

These made up the company assembled in the apartment mentioned, where was to be performed a drama, no less tragical because bloodless.

And in the kitchen were four redcoats—British soldiers, a sergeant and three privates—seated at the table with cards in and Hollands at hand. Evidently their presence had been secured in view of possible contingencies.

The supreme moment in the existence of Constance was at hand. The minister opened his lips, and the service was begun.

The two first clauses in the service (Episcopal) had been repeated, and the minister, after a short pause, took up the third, commencing with the momentous question to the groom, which he proceeded most solemnly to propound:

"Wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife—"

He proceeded no further, being interrupted by the sudden and noisy opening of the door leading to the kitchen, followed by the entrance of a man who was fairly pushed into the room by the "redcoats," one of whom (the sergeant, presumably) just showing his face, said, in rather a husky voice, and apologetically:

"This man would come in. We didn't have no orders to shoot him, and didn't shoot him, you know."

The speaker then disappeared and shut the door.

Hugh Lee was added to the wedding guests?

Instantly he sprang toward Constance.

"What is this? What does this mean?" he wildly cried, with an indelible expression of concern on his face, as he looked upon her deathly pale and agonized countenance.

She closed her eyes, staggered, and fell into his arms in a swoon, he resigning her to the care of her father and brother a moment later.

"I'll answer your question," said Walt Whyte, who, strange to say, showed no anger and no perturbation—no solicitude for the bride even—but in the lines of his now colorless face and in the gleam of his dark eyes, a diabolism that was appalling. "I'll answer your question. Hugh Lee. We were to have been married, but you interrupted the ceremony—for the time being only, however. When she recovers the ceremony will go on."

Calm, cold, heartless, devilish was the tone in which he uttered these words, and his eyes, as they rested on Hugh, glittered with the malignity of a fiend.

"It sha'n't go on—it sha'n't!" cried Hugh, determinedly, his breast heaving and his eyes flashing. Turning then to the minister, who stood bewildered at his left, he said, appealingly: "That young girl is pledged to be my wife, sir. I love her an' she loves me. There's some foul play here. She never would marry that man—that villain—of her own accord."

"Wait till she comes to, Hugh Lee," said Walt Whyte, in a tone calm and confident, with a glance of ineffable hatred and triumph in his tone. "Wait till she comes to, and see if she

won't marry me. Before your very face she will beg for the ceremony to proceed."

"Impossible! It is false—false!" cried Hugh, his heart-strings wrung to agony.

"It is true! She loves me—loves me! Ha! ha! ha!"

It was the lightest, most mocking laugh possible, and would have been lost in the tones of Hugh's rejoinder had he spoken quicker.

"Liar an' villain!" he exclaimed; "you ain't fit to live! An angel marry a devil? I—"

"Stop, Hugh!" broke in Walt Whyte, in a tone as soft as a woman's in the sweetest mood; "You're getting too excited. I want you to stay to the wedding, but I'm afraid you'll disturb us. You call me such names, too, Hugh. But I'll fix it so you can stay and see us married—Constance and myself."

As he finished speaking he clapped his hands thrice, when into the room came the four "red-coats," muskets in hand; a quartet of ungainly fellows, whose walk and manner belied the British uniform, supposed to be a guarantee of soldierly bearing—an awkward squad, truly, the sergeant exhibiting no greater military proficiency than his men, but a much redder nose. But then they had had a free access to the jug of Holland.

"A prisoner for you, sergeant," said Walt Whyte, blandly, pointing at Hugh Lee. "I denounce him as a rebel spy. Secure him, and take him into the kitchen for the present. By and by I will give the signal, when you can bring him in again. He wishes to see the wedding ceremony, you know. The bride has fainted, but will recover shortly. Take him away!"

But almost immediately there ensued a transformation scene, coming as suddenly as one of the changes in a kaleidoscope.

"Well, why don't you remove the prisoner, sergeant?" queried Walt Whyte, very quietly, but in a tone and manner intended to impress the non-commissioned officer with a sense of the responsibility under which he rested, and to remind him of his duty in the premises.

The sergeant, who stood with his back to the speaker, face to face with Hugh Lee, turned about at these words, the movement making up in celerity what it lacked in military grace.

"I rather guess he don't wanter be took outer here, mister," he said, with a drawl, in response to Walt Whyte, a leer in his eye, and a smirk on his lips, then wiping his face.

This brought about the metamorphosis. It transformed Walt Whyte from the mildest-mannered and most confident of men, into the most surprised, excited, and discomfited of men.

"Good God!" he ejaculated, starting backward as though drawn by some unseen hand, his eyes bulging with amazement, and his face assuming a deathly pallor; "how in the name of the devil came you to be here, Sol Blake?"

"I come afoot, o' course," responded the pseudo sergeant, none other than the individual named by Walt Whyte, winking with malicious mirth as he spoke.

Then out from the squad of his own men, disguised as British soldiers, stepped Hugh Lee, three strides bringing him right in front of Walt Whyte.

"The tables are turned now, ye scoundrel!" he exclaimed, his eye flashing with hot wrath as he spoke. "Instead o' my being a prisoner to British redcoats, as you thought, you are a prisoner to the *Water Wagtails*, Walt Whyte—my prisoner!"

"You dare not make me your prisoner, Hugh Lee!" exclaimed Walt Whyte, defiantly; "you dare not!"

"Scoundrel!" he exclaimed, in a tone of bitter reproach, and was about to speak further when Walt Whyte, not three feet away, struck at him and got in the blow, but received one instantly in return that felled him to the floor.

Up in a moment he flew at Hugh like a madman, both going down in an instant in close and fierce embrace, Walt Whyte with his back to the floor, and at the mercy of Hugh, whose blood was up, and whose resolve was to punish his enemy then and there.

It had been better for Walt Whyte had the curb of discretion restrained his rash valor; as it did not, he was a severe sufferer at the hands of Hugh Lee, than whose no arm was ever more righteously raised against another.

Five minutes later, his arms bound behind him, his eyes tightly bandaged, a gag between his teeth, Walt Whyte was escorted from the Joy farm-house by two of the pseudo soldiers of King George, his destination being the secret cave of the *Water Wagtails*.

Hugh Lee, together with Sol Blake, for some months a member of the *Wagtail* crew, and the other mock soldier, Jake Long, remained behind, as did the two friends of Walt Whyte, who were constrained to prolong their visit from prudential motives on the part of our hero.

Only these five remained of the twelve present a few moments before, Constance having been taken from the room by her

father and brother the moment she had been relinquished to them by Hugh, who now went in quest of one or the other of her kinsmen, anxious to learn of her condition, mental and physical.

The door of Constance's room opened at this instant, and Farmer Joy stepped into the passage.

"How is she—Constance?" asked our hero, immediately, the interrogatory amounting to a demand, so earnest and vehement was his tone.

"If she dies, it'll be your fault, Hugh Lee; she may be dead now!" snapped her father, quickly, and with asperity.

"If she is," exclaimed Hugh, satisfied there was no danger, but wishing to impress the bitter old man; "if she is I'll find out what killed her! I'll find out, too, how to-night's business was brought about. I've got him, and he'll have to tell!"

"Him! who've ye got?" the old man sharply queried. It struck him instantly. "Walt Whyte?" he cried, acerbity giving place to concern in his tones, as he uttered the name.

With a cry that was half-howl, half-scream, intoned with mingled rage and fear, he sprang toward the door of the parlor, not far from which the three were standing, and disappeared, to learn from Walt Whyte's friends that of which he was ignorant.

When told of what had occurred, the old man, with a cry of insufferable agony, startling in its terrible intensity, rushed from the apartment out into the darkness of night and—we may as well say it here—his home saw him no more and forever!

What was the fate he met with no one ever knew; he "disappeared"—the most terrible of fates, in its operation on the minds of those who watch and wait, and wait and watch in vain.

What terrible secret of the old man's did Walt Whyte hold? A power of some sort, sufficient to intimidate Constance, and cause her to yield consent to a hateful marriage, he certainly possessed. Would Hugh Lee, with the black-hearted scoundrel in his power, ever be enlightened? That remains to be seen.

Shortly after the strangely sudden exit of Farmer Joy, Hugh Lee and his man left the house, as did Walt Whyte's two friends, who hastily decamped once out of doors.

But Hugh had the satisfaction of knowing before he left that Constance had revived, though he had not been able to speak with, or even see her.

CHAPTER X.

CONCERNING CONSTANCE JOY, HUGH LEE, AND WALT WHYTE.

Thirty days had been relegated to the abyss of the past, and the golden month of October was on the wheel of time, to be rolled, second by second, into eternity.

Oh, what a change—what a change in Constance Joy. What had wrought it we need not tell; our readers know the circumstances of *that night!*

Hugh Lee also suffered as poignantly as one could suffer in sympathy for another.

But his hope was strong—almost a belief—that Constance would get over grief in time, and be happy once more; and this made him strong while yet he suffered.

The capture of Walt Whyte by Hugh Lee hadn't resulted in the enlightenment of the latter in regard to the marriage that had been so nearly solemnized.

A prisoner at the mercy of Hugh Lee, Walt Whyte, though urged and threatened, refused to gratify his captor's curiosity, insisting that he had no secret to divulge; and that Constance had consented to marry him in obedience to the commands of her father, which Hugh knew to be false.

He was kept in the cave five days, bound and blindfolded, but to no purpose. He would reveal nothing, swearing he had nothing to reveal.

At the end of that time, having voluntarily sworn that he intended to leave the country for one of the British West India Islands, where his father was part owner of a plantation, and swearing to molest Constance no more, he was led from the cave at night, blindfolded, and released two miles away, Hugh finding it useless to keep him any longer.

Hugh Lee warned the dastardly fellow, however, when he set him free, that his life depended upon his fidelity to the oath he had taken in regard to Constance.

For twenty-five days after his release from the cave Walt Whyte never crossed the eastern boundary line of Hempstead; if he did, neither Hugh, Constance, nor any of their friends knew of it.

Some time during the night of the twenty-fifth day, the schooner *Walter Whyte*, owned by the senior of that name, and commanded by Captain Snow, sailed from North Hempstead

Harbor, bound for Jamaica, W. I., and as Walt Whyte was to have sailed in her, everybody next morning took it for granted that he had done so, though nobody saw him go aboard.

The date of the sailing of the *Walt Whyte*, brings to a close the thirty days alluded to at the opening of this chapter, when the scene changes from the Sound to the sea.

The morning following the sailing of the *Whyte* there was consternation in the Lee household.

It was caused by the revelations of Long Jim, who came over from the Joy farm to see if "Missy Stancy" and Gil had staid at the Lee farm the preceding night, they not having been at home.

Then old Captain Lee learned that Lucy went over to visit Constance the evening before; that with the latter and Gil she had left the Joy farm during the evening, and that she had not been home.

"I see it! I see it!" the old man groaned, "Walt Whyte hez carried off Joy's gal, and that Gil Joy hez carried off Lucy!"

Then he raved terribly, and cursed fearfully.

Cursed Gil Joy one minute, and the next called for Hugh, who had been on the Sound the preceding night, and was still absent.

What with rage and grief, he was a madman.

Two hours later Hugh reached home. He had heard astounding news—that Walt Whyte and Gil Joy had carried off Constance and Lucy in the schooner!

His father and Long Jim had spread the story, and before noon it was known all through Hempstead, and around and about, being credited by Patriots, and scouted by Tories, and creating great excitement.

Hugh believed it, after a vain search during the day for the missing ones; but no raving and cursing from him.

Sorely troubled he was, but silent, thoughtful, and resolved.

After his unavailing search he came to his home, but soon left, determined, as his face showed, on some form of action known only to himself.

The dwellers on Great and Cow Necks, respectively, awoke next morn to learn of the mysterious disappearance, during the night, of the *Arrow*, "Mose" Mudge's hermaphrodite brig.

Great was their wonderment, and wonderful, if not fearful, were their varied speculations concerning the mysterious flitting of the *Arrow*.

While yet the day was young, everybody dwelling on the borders of the Sound, from Flushing to Smithtown Bays, knew of the spiriting away of Mudge's brig; and the surprise and excitement were great.

The daring, audacious act was the topic discussed to the exclusion of every other, and men and women lauded and exulted, or condemned and deplored, according as the lenses through which they viewed the affair were Patriot or Tory, Mudge being a Tory.

"Wonder who did it?" or "Who'd ye s'pose did it?" were the only two forms of interrogation used, and no one could answer positively who.

People "guessed"—guessed this one and that one. Some guessed Hugh Lee, but nobody knew; though, as the day wore on, many settled on Hugh as having cut out the brig from Cow Bay, the fact of his not being seen strengthening their conclusions.

All in all, the day after the cutting out of the *Arrow*, was one of unparalleled excitement, and not forgotten in years, the unwonted agitation reaching its highest point when, about noon, the British corvette, *Vixen*, sailed up the Sound in rumored pursuit of the brig, which was fourteen hours ahead, and able to make ten knots to the corvette's seven.

CHAPTER XI.

HUGH LEE IN COMMAND OF THE ARROW.

When the *Vixen* left Flushing Bay the *Arrow* was off Gardiner's Island, within twenty miles of Montauk Point, when the whole boundless ocean was hers.

Hugh Lee, in a pea-jacket and "sou'-wester," stood near the helm with Sim Wales, the tiller being held by Sol Blake, four others of the crew being forward, the rest below, and not a man of the crew (all Wagtails) but knew something of sea life, Hugh and Sim being first-rate sailors, both having made whaling voyages with old Captain Lee.

Our hero looked anxious, but full of resolve, as his eyes were directed to the east and north, where possibly a British cruiser might be seen, a squadron rendezvousing at Newport, and cruising on and off the mouth of the Sound.

"It's agoin' ter be a nasty night, Cap'n Hugh," remarked Sim, casting his eyes to windward, where the aspect was a threatening one.

"Yes, it looks ugly to wind'ard ther', an' no mistake." coincided Hugh. "We'll ketch it b'ilin' outside; an' outside we go, sink or swim, survive or perish, ez Patrick Henry said."

"Two good reasons fur goin' out, an' none fur lyin' a-lee," returned Sim.

"You're right, Sim. That scoundrel, Walt Whyte, has got a start o' twenty-four hours on us, an' may have a fair wind now, an' that's reason enough, e'en if the Britishers weren't out o' the way. We must make an offing well to the east'ard, with as much southin' as we can git; an' if it gits too mighty for double reef sailin', we'll clew up tight an' heave to, with her nose right into 't, that's all."

At this Hugh commenced to pace the deck fore and aft in stern silence, his brow contracted and his teeth hard-set.

He was thinking of Constance and his sister, of Walt Whyte and Gil Joy. He wondered if he would overtake the Whyte, or how his cruise would end. He could not predict, and was most depressed in spirits—almost crushed when he thought of the agonizing situation.

About three o'clock the brig was off Montauk Point, the latter bearing sou, sou-west, and in lieu of a fresh, caught a stiff gale, and encountered an ugly cross sea, a nor'-west wind having prevailed for the three previous days.

It was near eight bells (four o'clock), and Hugh Lee stood by the weather rigging forward, facing the driving storm, which he heeded not, and gazing wistfully toward the south, as if expecting or hoping to discover the schooner that had sailed from Hempstead harbor twenty-four hours before him.

It was the changing of the watch at eight bells; there were two divisions of the crew, watch and watch; that broke Hugh's gloomy reverie, when he turned and started off, Sol Blake at the moment relinquishing the helm to Jake Long, a man who had seen some coasting service, as had Sol.

Night shut down black and wild, the weather, as Sim had predicted, being decidedly nasty, and promising worse.

"Give me the stick, Jake, I want to see how she acts now;" and Hugh grasped the tiller as he spoke.

"She's purty steady, Jake—don't yaw much," he said, after steering a few moments in silence; adding: "If she was six inches deeper she'd do better yet." Then to his mate he said: "We can stand on, Sim, a spell, but'll have to heave-to bimeby, I guess, if things get much uglier."

The watch changed now, and Zeb Swain came aft, with Sol Blake, to take his trick at the helm.

"Keep her jest 're she is," said Hugh, giving up the tiller, "an' don't let her fall off any."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Zeb, as he grasped the tiller and took notice of the compass.

Hugh then went forward, Sim, off watch by night, but remaining from inclination, accompanying him with a lantern—went forward for an inspection.

CHAPTER XII.

A STRANGE SAIL SIGHTED TO WINDWARD.

Bright was the dawn, and when the sun, like a disc of red-hued gold, came up from the sea, its pathway of ethereal blue, swept by a north-west wind, was not marked by a single cloud from horizon to horizon.

Hugh Lee, on deck before the sun appeared above the dark-blue line of the horizon, looked greatly refreshed, and was not a little satisfied with the changed condition of things—a fair, fresh wind and a cloudless sky, instead of a dead-head gale, and storm.

The brig, with everything set and drawing well, bowled merrily along over the white-capped waves at the rate of ten knots, her course lying sou' sou'-east, with no other sail within the periphery of the encompassing horizon.

At noon a more southerly course was laid and held for three days, when the brig was met by a tearing sou'-easter off Hatteras—well off—lasting for twenty-four hours.

Determined not to be driven back if he could help it, and not wishing to run to the eastward, Hugh hove the brig to, and rode out the gale in safety. It was just after seven bells on the afternoon of the fifth day, Cape Lookout, bearing about west sou'-west twenty-five miles distant, the brig beating against a southerly wind, that Hugh Lee, who was pacing the brig's deck, from the starboard fore-channels to the quarter-pieces aft, his mind racked and his heart torn, heard the cry of "Sail ho!" from the lookout aloft.

"Where away? What do ye make her out?" he demanded, instantly and vehemently, his to and fro movements, like those of a caged and chafing lion, ceasing with his ejaculation, when his eyes sought the lookout on the foretop-gallant yard.

"On the weather beam. Can't make her out—she's on'y a speck!" cried the lookout.

"Ready about, boys!" shouted Hugh, every man springing to his place on the instant. "Hard a-lee—steady!"

Tacks and sheets were handled with a will, and the brig came quickly into the wind, when her head fell off to leeward, and her sails catching the wind, she dashed away on the port tack like a hound on the scent.

Then Hugh, taking his glass in hand for the fiftieth time that day, went like a cat up the weather fore-rigging to the foretop, from whence he scanned the sea to the southward in search of the strange sail, which he prayed, though he hardly dared to hope, would be the Walter Whyte.

"D'ye make her out, Cap'n Hugh?" queried Sol Blake, who had the deck in that watch, after our hero had been in the foretop some five minutes.

"By the Lord Harry, it's a schooner, bound south!" cried Hugh, in an ecstasy of satisfaction, not in reply to Sol, but at the very instant the latter sent up his query. "Get aloft here an' take a look at her," our hero sang out a moment later.

Sol swung himself to the rail by the backstay, and gaining the shrouds, was aloft in the foretop in a moment.

Other than that the strange sail was a schooner south bound, and at the moment on the same tack with the brig, could not be made out; and Sol shortly came to the deck, Hugh not long after first calling the lookout down to the foretop, and giving him the glass, telling him to give notice when the stranger tacked.

A miserable night was that which Hugh passed, alternating between cabin and deck until about three A. M., when he turned in, the fact that it was falling calm adding to his burden of misery.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR HERO JUST IN TIME TO BE IN AT THE DEATH.

The sea next morning was as smooth as oil, but gently undulating.

Hugh came on deck just before sunrise, and looked to the south, then all round the horizon, through his glass, and saw—water, water, water everywhere, but not a sail in sight.

The wind came up with the sun from the south and east, but before night it blew fair for the brig from the north-east, and at the end of three days she was on the Bahama banks, her run down having been uneventful and monotonous to Hugh, not even a sail appearing on the horizon to arise, by curiosity and speculation, the weight of wretchedness upon him.

On the morning of the fourth day, the brig just entering the Straits of Florida, Hugh appeared on deck a little before sunrise, having been called by Sol Blake, who discovered a sail ahead—dim and uncertain in the dawning light, but certainly a sail.

For an hour the brig sped on, bringing the schooner, as the sail proved to be, within a distance of four miles.

Half an hour more and the intervening distance was reduced to a little something over two miles.

"Sim, come forward!" sung out our hero in the weather-bow, in an excited tone, his mate reaching his side in a moment.

"Look!" exclaimed Hugh, passing the glass to Sim, who had it leveled in an instant; "look!"

"Skin me 'f thet don't look suthin like the Whyte's starn!" said the mate, in a moment.

"It is her—it is the Whyte!" cried Hugh, confidently, and not a little agitated.

"Blamed 'f I don't b'lieve 'tis!" was Sim's confirmatory response.

A few moments more and the name—Walter Whyte—could be made out with the glass, and three men, besides the helmsman, could be seen on deck, the three working the pump.

The brig bore down upon the partially disabled schooner until within hailing distance, when the yards were braced, and her main-sheet run out to slacken her speed, her mainmast not being noticed much by those on the schooner's deck.

"Schooner, ahoy!" hailed Hugh, in a voice now braced to firmness.

"Hello!" came back from the helmsman of the schooner.

"Want any help?" queried Hugh.

"Dunno's we do. I'll git ther skipper up and see. (Jim, get ther skipper on deck.) Wher' ye bound, stranger? Wher' from?"

"Spanish Town, Jamaica," answered Hugh, promptly. "From New Bedford."

"Sho! Ye don't say so? Ther's wher' we air bound. We've got some pass'ngers aboard, w'ich mout like ter git aboard the brig. I dunno, I guess they would."

The heart of Hugh jumped to his throat.

"Passengers, eh? How many? Any women folks?" he queried, in a tone which the other might have thought one of remarkable concern.

"Five on 'em in all—three men an' two women folks—but one on 'em's in a bad way; got smashed when ther mainmast went by the board."

"Heave to—heave her up!" cried Hugh, whose heart sank to zero—he was sure it was Constance who had been "smashed" by the falling mainmast.

The schooner's helm went hard-a-lee, and she came slowly into the wind. The brig ran astern of her, and likewise came up into the wind, laying the schooner aboard on the starboard hand.

"Make fast!" cried Hugh, and, springing into the schooner's fore-rigging, was on her deck in an instant, six other following him.

Dashing aft, our hero was met by the skipper, just up from below—Skipper Snow, formerly of the Eagle.

Hugh was not surprised, but Skipper Snow was—more, he was struck with amazement; was rooted speechless to the spot.

An instant after him, there appeared on deck before the eyes of Hugh Lee—Gil Joy!

"You scoundrel!" groaned Hugh, out between his hard-set teeth. "*You scoundrel I'll choke the —*"

He was interrupted by a cry—a shriek it was—that embraced astonishment, joy, and horror in its tones. Then, instantly, the voice cried, in horrified accents:

"Hugh! Hugh! for mercy's sake don't kill him—don't kill my brother! Thank him! thank him!"

The cry doubtless saved that brother's life. The next instant the would-be avenger and the utterer of the cry were in each other's arms.

A brief but fervent embrace, rendered pathetic by the sobs of Constance, and Hugh, gently raising the head of his betrothed from his breast, asked for his sister.

"She's down stairs with Walt—he's dreadful, Hugh. He's going to die, I know he is—the mast broke and fell on him. Go down stairs and see him, do—you'll never regret it."

Hugh looked at the speaker with astonishment.

A scream from below was heard at this instant. The next, Lucy Lee came flying up the companion-way, crying in frightened accents:

"He's dead! He's dead!"

Hugh sprang toward her. At the sight of his apparition, she fainted in his arms, Gil Joy, rushing up at the moment, having recovered from the choking he had received.

"But there are five passengers aboard—where's the fifth? Who is he?" Hugh asked, turning to Constance.

"Minister Clark," answered she, "who was to have married us—Walt and I—" (she shuddered)—"he was brought aboard, too; and he's in the cabin—here he comes now."

And the "fifth passenger" came on deck.

Half an hour later, and all belonging aboard the brig, with the passengers on the schooner, were aboard the first named vessel—yes, and the body of Walt Whyte, Constance insisting that he should have as decent a burial as could be under the circumstances.

When the brig cast off from the schooner, Hugh sang out to the skipper:

"Only for your men, I'd burn the schooner, an' let ye take to a boat! Ye knew about this job; if ye didn't, when ye'd found it out ye'd pulled back. Don't ye come to Hempstead again, Skipper Snow—don't ye!"

There was no reply; and the two vessels parted, the schooner sailing south, and the brig heading a course north-east.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

Hugh and the passengers then descended to the cabin of the brig, quite a spacious one and comfortable for the times.

There he heard the "whole story" of the abduction in detail, which we must give in brief.

Walt Whyte, after his release from the cave of the Wagtails, resolved to carry off Constance Joy in his father's vessel. Skipper Snow was privy to this purpose, but Hugh had not been informed of it at the time of parting with him.

On the day of the Whyte's sailing—Walt and Gil Joy had been together without separating—Walt kept the other with him for a purpose, having great influence over him, and being able to work him like wax.

When evening set in, the two were aboard the schooner. Walt was suddenly prostrated by an attack of heart-disease, of which complaint his mother had died.

He insisted that he was going to die—knew that he was, and had no trouble in working Gil up to believe it.

He dispatched him for Minister Clark—no use to send for his father, as he was away, and a doctor was not thought of; told him to bring his sister Constance, as he had something to confess to her in his dying hour that would lift the load of misery from her soul forever!

Gil went for the minister, then home for his sister; finding Lucy there, he made known his message, and asked Lucy to go with Constance, and they went.

When the three went aboard the schooner in the darkness, unseen by a single soul, the minister was there, and Walt Whyte in terrible agony.

It lasted only a moment, when he came to his feet in perfect health; the schooner was in motion, the four were "passengers," and, for that matter, prisoners!

From the tightly closed cabin no cries were heard by any one ashore, and the schooner glided out upon the Sound.

Walt then ordered the clergyman to finish the ceremony he had once begun in his case, saying to Gil that he could be married to Lucy at the same time; otherwise, he never would be—he thought Gil would snap at this bait.

He was mistaken.

Gil was incensed at having been so beguiled, and showed himself as he never had before.

Of course the minister had refused to have any hand in the matter, and so Walt Whyte had four arrayed against him.

"You'll all agree to this before we get on the Atlantic, headed for the West Indies," said he. "If you don't, you'll all go there."

He found himself mistaken again.

To his credit be it said, little as it is, that he used no harsh measures on the trip. Once every day he would ask Constance if she would consent to the marriage, threatening that, when Jamaica was reached, she should be his without marriage if she refused.

Gil would have nothing to say to him, but stood by the girls nobly, as did the minister, while Walt smiled ever a Mephistophelian smile.

During the second gale encountered by the brig, by some bungling or other, the schooner's mainmast went by the board, and Walt Whyte was terribly crushed—the only one hurt aboard.

He would have put back, but Skipper Snow would not do it.

Helplessly crushed, the four individuals whom he had so foully dealt with, did everything in their power to alleviate his sufferings, watching by him in pairs in turn, for it took two to attend him.

After two days, knowing that he would die this time, Walt Whyte *did* confess to Constance, in presence of the minister, that which lifted the load of misery from her soul forever.

What that confession was Hugh Lee doubtless learned when Constance became his wife, but not before.

Such is the substance of what Hugh learned from Constance and Gil, his sister and the minister; and when the story was told he embraced Constance tenderly, his sister lovingly, Gil Joy cordially, and the minister thankfully, and then proposed the deck, as the weather was fine.

All in good spirits, Constance comparatively so, they emerged from the cabin, Hugh the last on deck.

At the suggestion of Sol Blake, Constance stepped up to Hugh, gave him her hand, and led him in front of the minister; whereat a hearty cheer rang out from the lookers-on—a rousing, ringing cheer of approbation.

In ten minutes Hugh Lee and Constance Joy were husband and wife, Sol Blake standing as Hugh's "best man."

"Now, Lucy, you an' Gil," said Hugh, and seriously, too.

"Oh, do!" cried Constance—"do!" and embraced Lucy, whispering something in her ear.

As she had done, so did Lucy—stepped up to Gil Joy, gave him her hand, and led him in front of the minister. another rousing cheer going up.

In ten minutes Gil Joy and Lucy Lee were husband and wife, Hugh standing as Gil's "best man."

Then out rang three cheers for each couple wedded under a Southern sun, on a Southern sea, under such peculiar circumstances; and for the rest of the day gladness was unconfined.

Reader, our story is done. But we will say that, when the sun sank in the west, the body of Walt Whyte was consigned to the sea with appropriate ceremony. The service and the scene were most inexpressive; and before the close thereof, every eye moistened, most shedding tears.

[THE END.]

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